



DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS, AND GOVERNANCE ASSESSMENT: GUYANA

AUGUST 2021

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This publication was produced for review by the United States Agency for International Development. It was prepared independently under the Analytical Services IV IDIQ by Brenda Lee Pearson, Candice Ramessar, and Remi Anderson for DPI-MCI.

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DISCLAIMER

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AFC	Alliance for Change
APNU+AFC	A Partnership for National Unity and Alliance for Change
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CDC	Community Democratic Councils
CNOOC	Chinese National Offshore Oil Corporation
COMET	Community Empowerment and Transformation
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DDI	Development, Democracy and Innovation Bureau
DRG	Democracy, Human Rights and Governance
EITI	Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative
ERC	Ethnic Relations Commission
ESC	Eastern and Southern Caribbean
EU	European Union
GDF	Guyana Defense Force
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GECOM	Guyana Elections Commission
GOG	Government of Guyana
IBRD	International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
IDB	Inter-American Development Bank
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
KII	Key Informant Interview
LAPOP	Latin American Public Opinion Project
LGBTQI	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Intersex
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys
MPs	Members of Parliament
NCN	National Communications Network
NRF	Natural Resources Fund
PAC	Public Accounts Committee
PNC, PNC-R	People's National Congress-Reform (sometimes known as just PNC)
PPC	Public Procurement Commission
PPP, PPP/C	Peoples Progressive Party/Civic (sometimes known as just PPP)
PSC	Public Service Commission
RDCS	Regional Development Cooperation Strategy
SWF	Sovereign Wealth Fund
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
US	United States
USAID	US Agency for International Development
USG	US Government

MAP OF GUYANA



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) requested a democracy, human rights, and governance (DRG) assessment for Guyana to provide the Eastern and Southern Caribbean (ESC) Mission with analysis and recommendations. This DRG Assessment is based on USAID's DRG Strategic Assessment Framework and identifies key DRG opportunities and challenges in Guyana. The report also provides a political economy analysis of reform supporters and opponents (both actors and institutions) within the DRG sector, and offers strategic recommendations that account for Mission priorities, available resources, and the initiatives of other donors and stakeholders.

Guyana's political economy and socio-cultural context provide the settings for this DRG assessment. Its origins, history, cultural foundations, and other contextual factors provide nuanced information that assists the Assessment Team to analyze the DRG elements and identify the associated DRG challenges, as well as the structural constraints, opportunities, and interests of key actors who can promote or hinder political reform in a country. The main conclusion of this exercise was that the broader context of consensus and inclusion are the underlying challenges for Guyanese citizens and impede the framing of a common vision of the country's future. The ruling party, the People's Progressive Party (PPP) and the opposition coalition the A Partnership for National Unity and Alliance for Change (APNU+AFC) need to find a way to form a functioning democracy based on power-sharing rather than a "winner takes all" mentality. This would ensure that the unprecedented wealth in oil reserves can be transparently and equitably managed for the benefit of all Guyanese.

The assessment team conducted a robust desk review of articles and documents that reflect the most significant political and economic changes, donor priorities, and external drivers of change that have impacted Guyana in the period 2016-2021.

Main Changes in Democracy and Governance in Guyana 2016-2021

- Discovery of substantial offshore oil and natural gas deposits will transform the country's economy and ability to achieve national development objectives
- Disputed outcome of the March 2020 national elections led to five-month stalemate and a refusal by the opposition to recognize the legitimacy of the new government
- Two local elections held in 2016 and 2018 were won by PPP/C and were characterized by low voter turnout; the political polarization of governing issues by the two major political parties overshadowed attempts at decentralization of government services and empowering local officials cause of polarization and lack of movement at national level
- Crime and security issues are negatively impacted by external drivers: migrants from Venezuela, international drug and weapons trafficking and internal drivers: economic impact of Covid-19 political polarization and lack of national consensus and inclusivity.

KEY CHALLENGES TO DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

The assessment found problems in all five elements of democracy, human rights, and governance. The most critical are in the areas of *competition and political accountability, consensus and inclusion*.

Competition and political accountability: Political parties have been organized along ethnic lines since before independence. Indo-Guyanese have supported the People's Progressive Party Civic (PPP/C) party since 1950 while Afro-Guyanese have supported the People's National Congress (PNC), the largest political party of the APNU+AFC coalition, since 1957.

Political power is highly centralized in the executive branch of government that reinforces a one-party rule dominated closely with a single ethnic group. Institutions not affiliated with the executive branch are weak and do not have a strong tradition of ensuring government accountability. The country's proportional system for representation in the National Assembly often makes lawmakers more accountable to party leaders rather than to constituents in their regions. Government accountability hinges a great deal on how it handles electoral reform and whether meaningful steps are taken to empower local officials.

Consensus: National consensus on critical development and economic issues seems elusive due to the prolonged political instability that has widened the political and racial divide within Guyana. Although both political parties have a shared commitment to a democratic system there is little agreement on how to achieve consensus for necessary electoral and institutional reforms and stewardship of national wealth. It is incumbent on the government, parliament and the citizens to reach across the racial and ethnic divide to come to a common vision of a new national development plan. The lack of political agreement regarding policy priorities for economic opportunities and social benefits perpetuates long standing disparities in the country.

Inclusion: Access to social and economic resources has varied depending on which political party is dominant in the political cycle. The parties derive their support from distinct ethnic blocks of voters, which often pits Indo-Guyanese against African Guyanese. This political favoritism towards one ethnic group is especially worrisome as Guyana is on the cusp of unprecedented economic transformation. Vulnerable populations, rural and hinterland residents, along with the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex (LGBTQI) population have been excluded from meaningful engagement in political life and policymaking.

Government responsiveness and effectiveness: The new government has a strong interest in projecting political stability that is supported by a constitutionally legitimate and internationally recognized government. The first challenge for the new government was its responsiveness to the Covid-19 pandemic, which revealed that Guyana's very limited healthcare infrastructure cannot serve most citizens outside of Georgetown, the country's capital. The government promised nearly GYD4.5 billion in relief to help the population cope with the economic consequences of the pandemic, but the equitable distribution of the relief has been far from transparent. The government also must address illegal gold mining and increasing criminality of gangs and drug cartels operating in the hinterlands of the country.

Rule of Law and human rights: Guyana has ratified eleven human rights treaties and incorporated their obligations into national legislation in the following areas: education, preventing gender violence, medical termination of pregnancy, Indigenous People's rights, child protection, equal right to property, family and parenting rights, employment and social security, labor. The enforcement and application of these laws is anemic and uneven across race, ethnicity and geographic location. Indigenous populations suffer from insecure land tenure and require the approval of the Minister of Amerindian Affairs for various legal protections to be effective. Legal and societal discrimination remains high for LGBTQI persons; laws criminalize consensual same-sex sexual conduct between adult men.¹ Domestic abuse is widespread, and conviction rates for such abuse and for sexual offenses are low. Harsh prison conditions are also cited as human rights violations in many global indices, and the court system backlog has created a pre-trial detention rate of 30 percent.²

¹ Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2019 United States Department of State • Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor

² Ibid

This DRG assessment identifies challenges to competition and political accountability that make consensus and inclusion elusive in the country. Foremost is weak political accountability, which influences all the other DRG elements; especially the lack of consensus on the democratic and economic future of the country. Guyana is becoming a more important partner in the region for the US and other countries while at the same time Guyana's political instability raises concerns that the country is unprepared for its newfound wealth without a plan to manage the new revenue and equitably disburse the financial benefits.

International experience shows that transparent oversight by national authorities is crucial to manage the risks that the oil and gas sector generates while maximizing the economic benefits. Effective governance of the country's vast new wealth will be dependent upon prioritizing institutional reforms, strengthening the civil service and ensuring inclusive oversight of the country's national development strategy. The key challenges are improving the government's accountability and transparency across the public sector and designing appropriate national development policies that deliver equitable services to all its citizens. Trust in institutions and rule of law remain low because government effectiveness and accountability are susceptible to political pressure. Guyana's governance and human development scores are in the lower levels of global rankings.³ The most significant lagging indicator is the low level of citizens' meaningful participation in local and national decision-making.

Guyana has had a peaceful transition of power, but the twenty-month continuation of a caretaker government (since the no confidence motion of December 2018) exposed the country's democratic and institutional weaknesses. National elections were held on March 2, 2020 and won by the People's Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C) led by Irfaan Ali; although the election results were delayed due to the litigation of numerous fraud allegations and other legal challenges. The United States, Canada, Great Britain, the European Union, and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) all played major roles in helping to resolve the political crisis in Guyana. Following the internationally observed vote recount, the Guyana Elections Commission (GECOM) declared Irfaan Ali as the winner, and he was sworn in as president in August 2020. His victory returned the PPP/C to power after a five-year hiatus in opposition. The defeated APNU+AFC coalition continues its legal appeals regarding the election outcome, which does nothing to lessen the polarization of the ethnically based political parties. There is not a modern and sizeable civil society active in Guyana that can contribute to national reconciliation. Aside from state-owned National Communications Network (NCN), there are no alternative media outlets with national coverage to offer a variety of information. Consequently, there is no cohesive public pressure for substantive political or electoral reform stemming from the political crisis. International pressure on the two parties for better governance practices is not breaking the stalemate.

DONOR ASSISTANCE IN GUYANA

USAID's comparative advantage in promoting the DRG elements analyzed in this assessment is related to its long history of working in Guyana, although there were complaints that USAID Mission's reduced presence in Guyana came at an inopportune period of bilateral relations. The goal of USAID/ESC 2020-2025 Regional Development Cooperation Strategy (RDCS) is to promote a safe, prosperous and resilient Caribbean region that supports its vulnerable populations, withstands external shocks, and promotes accountable institutions, economic development, and private sector led growth. In this new strategy, USAID will work to strengthen citizen security; promote self-reliance financing, and support resilience within national institutions and systems and among communities and citizens. The USAID and broader United States Government (USG) objectives to strengthen citizen security have been well received by Guyanese as well as efforts through the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative to enhance the security of the region. Other donor partners have different priorities of investment, which are briefly described below.

³ From 2015 to 2020, Guyana has marginally improved its ranking in the Human Development Index from 127 to 122. hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/rankings.pdf

The foreign assistance budgets of the United Kingdom, Canada, European Union (EU), and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) are quite small and similar in size to that of USAID. There is not too much overlap in donor programming, which focuses primarily on supporting vulnerable populations, especially indigenous peoples; improving education, strengthening health care and hospitals; digitizing records and court administration, and building resilience to climate change. New donor strategies are targeting support to vulnerable populations, especially indigenous populations, improvements to health care services and small-scale environmental awareness and advocacy investments. In key informant interviews, donors did not express optimism that the political parties will break the impasse regarding electoral reforms but emphasized the need for building consensus around a broad national strategy to ensure equitable distribution of new wealth.

Most of Canada's regional aid to the Caribbean and to Guyana is funded through Canada's contributions to the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) Trust Fund for the Caribbean Resilience Facility and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) Regional Technical Assistance Center while bilateral aid to Guyana targets climate resilience activities and supporting vulnerable populations, including people with disabilities, gender, youth, LGBTQI and institutions that support indigenous populations. Regional and bilateral aid from the United Kingdom is primarily focused on helping the vulnerable Caribbean prepare for and reduce the risk from climate change and disasters. Other aid assistance goes to retrofitting hospitals in the regions outside of Georgetown and rural development projects that benefit indigenous peoples.

The United Nations (UN) has 23 entities operating in Guyana that focus on health, humanitarian assistance to vulnerable populations, resilience building and agricultural support. The UN agencies led a \$4 million "Spotlight" initiative to address the root causes of gender-based violence, promote a public education campaign and engage government counterparts. The EU concentrates on a few development issues, including climate change and forest protection, judicial reforms, and governance on a very broad scale.

In contrast to the smaller investments by USAID, bilateral, UN and EU investments, the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and World Bank have much more robust programming in the areas of public sector reforms. The IDB and World Bank have the largest donor portfolios of more than \$260 and \$61 million respectively, to support efforts for economic diversification and modern industrial and labor policies. The priorities are strengthening fiscal policies, facilitating private sector development to support the delivery of better services, and delivering critical infrastructure. The targeted areas of IDB investment are infrastructure, hospitality, and agriculture. The IDB advises the Government of Guyana (GOG) to prioritize public procurement reforms and operationalizing the oversight of the country's sovereign wealth fund. The other pressing need is to develop a public investment planning body that will link strategic policy goals to public spending. The current World Bank project portfolio has five projects in the areas of education, energy and extractives, flood risk management, and the financial sector.

CARICOM played a major role in helping to end the political crisis in Guyana through diplomatic work, by sending election observers, and mediating amongst the various political actors who have competing agendas. US Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken met virtually with the foreign ministers from the CARICOM member states in April 2021 to advance bilateral and regional interests, specially focused on plans to manage the COVID-19 pandemic and to promote a regional recovery, cooperation on increasing climate resilience, and continued collaborations on strengthening security, democratic values, and human rights. The US supports the strengthening of CARICOM's role as a strong multilateral organization to address security and stability issues.

In this report, the assessment team offers three high-level findings for the Mission to consider as it implements its new RDSCS:

1. *Prepare for a massive influx of government revenue with little expertise on how to handle it.* Guyana will face an array of governance and institutional challenges as it tries to manage an expected annual revenue of an estimated \$10 billion. Limited and ineffectual government accountability mechanisms can undermine citizen's confidence in public institutions and further erode consensus in a vision for the country's future. Improving the effectiveness of the country's public integrity institutions is critical to inclusive, sustainable development.
2. *Address the critical need for a National Development Strategy that accelerates democratization of public institutions and spending.* The government and opposition parties must find non-partisan areas of cooperation reaching far beyond political parties to include technical experts and advocates for public spending on health, education, job creation and climate change risks. A participatory effort involving the public and private sectors and providing opportunities for public input can build consensus and public confidence in the equitability of the plan. Inequitable distribution of oil wealth will exacerbate the deep disparities between regions and ethnic groups so social protection and cash transfers will become important for the country's poorest and most vulnerable. The country can afford to provide the most basic social services to every citizen of the country.
3. *Assume the political stranglehold of the two political parties is cracking.* The political impulses from the past will not be able to handle massive oil production and revenues without challenges from key internal and external stakeholders. Indigenous voters and small parties may become key to the formation of governing coalitions, which would change the nature of policy and the political calculus of reform. Guyanese youth have shown through their activism in the last two elections that they are not tied to the old identity politics of their parents. There is a glimmer of hope that the ethnically-based two party system is giving way to a more pluralistic society that sees people as individuals: women, youth, indigenous and LGBTQI—and not just as ethnic blocks of voters. These voters want to elect people who can get something done.

USAID should consider how to help Guyana as it struggles with the interplay of accountability, consensus and inclusion. These gaps in governance are manifested in multiple ways across the country and involve many political actors and institutions both inside Guyana and externally. The USG and other international community actors can play roles in closing these gaps:

Support the Government of Guyana in drafting and building consensus around a National Development Strategy and National Development Budget.

The United States could leverage its diplomatic power to jumpstart a dialogue on a national development strategy and national development policy. There is a precedent for USAID to support this type of initiative either directly or through partners like the Carter Center, as it did in the 1990s. The aim of this initiative is to launch a consensus-based process that would be beneficial to the Government of Guyana, civil society and the private sector to bring about policy change without further political polarization. The aim of this National Development Strategy is to weave together macroeconomic and sectoral analyses and proposals into a consistent policy fabric that will bring substantial benefits to all groups in society.

Ramp up investments in youth, women and indigenous people’s Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) based in communities to support change-agents.

Continue technical assistance for national-level policy advocacy and social cohesion that will articulate the demand for political change and better governance. Youth-focused interventions were identified by many stakeholders as critical to building good local citizen advocates and increasing citizen security.

Target parliamentary and rule of law support to create cultures of innovation within parliamentary committees and constitutionally mandated oversight commissions.

Technical assistance to parliament to improve its oversight of the executive branch through strengthened committee hearing procedures; assist parliamentary committees in further strengthening their public oversight hearings on executive branch laws, policies, and conduct; and facilitate collaborative work between parliament and the executive by bringing key players from both branches together to plan hearings, identify expert witnesses, and prepare statements of support for holding these hearings.

Assess options to reconstitute the membership of the public integrity institutions to increase capacity, oversight, and accountability.

Provide technical support to strengthen the work of public integrity institutions, which are constitutionally mandated. Tap into best practices to avoid pitfalls of the “resource curse” and support accountability and anti-corruption principles through adherence to Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) standards and global indexes such as The World Bank’s *Ease of Doing Business*. ExxonMobil and Hess as influential members of the EITI can provide guidance and support to Guyana as it makes the necessary reforms to reach compliance of international standards. These two oil companies and the Chinese National Offshore Oil Corporation (CNOOC) also are providing indirect support to Guyana through philanthropic efforts like the Guyana Development Initiative and the Greater Guyana Initiative.

Create incentives and facilities for the involvement of the diaspora in the national development strategy and implementation.

Political parties and the Government of Guyana should coordinate efforts to engage the diaspora to participate in the political process, increase remittances and private investment, and contribute to strengthening higher education. Guyana suffers from a deficit of skilled labor that is likely to grow in the energy sector as well as other sectors; many Guyanese believe the diaspora could play a role in the country’s economic transformation.

INTRODUCTION

ASSESSMENT PURPOSE

USAID requested a DRG Assessment for Guyana. The scope of this Assessment calls for two inter-connected tasks: (1) an assessment of political change and democratization in Guyana; and (2) the development of strategic and programmatic recommendations to address major barriers to the consolidation of democracy in Guyana. The analysis contained in this report defines the core DRG problems in the country, identifies actors and institutions that could support or resist reforms, and considers the USG position and USAID's operational and programmatic environment. Currently, USAID/ESC's program in the region, including Guyana, focuses on promoting a safe, prosperous and resilient Caribbean region, strengthening government accountability and transparency, and strengthening community resilience. The previous DRG Assessment was conducted in 2016, shortly after national elections brought to power a new coalition government that had been in opposition since 1992. The primary developments since the 2016 assessment include: 1) further national elections and an alternation of power; and 2) the discovery of vast offshore oil and gas reserves.

This 2021 DRG Assessment is based on USAID's DRG Strategic Assessment Framework and identifies key DRG opportunities and challenges in Guyana. The report also provides a political economy analysis of reform supporters and opponents (both actors and institutions) within the DRG sector, and offers strategic recommendations that account for Mission priorities, available resources, and the initiatives of other donors and stakeholders.

COUNTRY CONTEXT 2015-2020

Until 2019, Guyana was one of the poorest countries in South America with 43.4 percent of the population living on less than \$5.50 per person a day.⁴ It has one of the highest emigration rates in the world, as about half of the Guyanese with tertiary education leave Guyana and more than 40 percent of its citizens reside abroad.⁵ This emerging upper-middle income country with a population of less than 800,000 now possesses one of the world's largest share of oil per capita.⁶ Since 2015, ExxonMobil has made over a dozen discoveries of oil off the shore of Guyana that now total more than 5 billion barrels of recoverable reserves. The magnitude of this find is on par with the known oil reserves in Qatar. The major discovery of this oil reserve will shift Guyana's economy to an oil-producing nation in a majority partnership with ExxonMobil (45 percent), Hess (30 percent), and CNOOC (25 percent), which are American, British and Chinese partners, respectively. Guyana is becoming a more important partner in the region for the United States (US) and other countries while at the same time the country's political instability raises concerns that the country is unprepared for its newfound wealth without a plan to manage its new wealth and equitably disburse the financial benefits.

With a population of 789,647 residents, Guyana's enormous oil and gas resources present a window of opportunity to pursue innovation and address longstanding development challenges.

Transparent oversight by national authorities is crucial to manage the risks that the oil and gas sector generates, while maximizing its economic benefits. Effective governance of the country's vast new wealth will be dependent upon prioritizing institutional reforms, strengthening the civil service and ensuring

⁴ World Bank: A Pivotal moment for Guyana Realizing the Opportunities – Systematic Country Diagnostic, January 26, 2021.

⁵ <https://www.csis.org/analysis/guyanese-diaspora>

⁶ According to the World Development Indicator definitions cited in the World Bank Pivotal Moment for Guyana Realizing the Opportunities: Systematic Country Diagnostic, 2021, p. 23.

inclusive oversight of a national development strategy. The key challenges are improving the government's accountability and transparency across the public sector and designing appropriate national development policies that deliver equitable services to all its citizens. Trust in institutions and rule of law remain low because government effectiveness and accountability are susceptible to political pressure. Guyana's governance and human development scores are in the lower levels of global rankings.⁷ The most significant lagging indicator is the low level of citizens' meaningful participation in local and national decision-making.

Guyana has had a peaceful transition of power but the twenty-month continuation of a caretaker government since the December 2018 no-confidence motion exposed the country's democratic and institutional weaknesses. On December 21, 2018, Parliament passed a no-confidence motion by just one vote and the APNU+AFC coalition-led parliament was dissolved on December 30, 2019. National elections were held on March 2, 2020, and won by the People's Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C), led by Irfaan Ali. The election results were delayed due to the litigation of numerous fraud allegations and other legal challenges to the election process.

The US, Canada, Great Britain, the EU, and CARICOM all played major roles in helping to resolve the political crisis in Guyana. The vote recount was overseen by a three-member delegation from CARICOM nations and election observers from the CARICOM Secretariat in May-June. Following the internationally observed vote recount, the GECOM declared PPP/C as the winner, and Irfaan Ali was sworn in as president in August 2020. His victory returned the PPP/C to power after a five-year hiatus in opposition.

The defeated APNU+AFC coalition continues its legal appeals regarding the election outcome, which does nothing to lessen the polarization of the ethnically-based political parties. There is not a vibrant and sizeable civil society active in Guyana that can contribute to national reconciliation, nor is there a national media that reaches citizens beyond the capital and coastal towns. Consequently, there is no cohesive public pressure for substantive political or electoral reform stemming from the political crisis. International pressure on the two parties for better governance practices is not breaking the stalemate.

The new PPP/C governing coalition is moving forward with a cabinet which includes fresh faces and experienced former elected officials, such as Vice President Bharat Jagdeo. President Ali is the first Muslim leader in the Caribbean Basin, which brings a new element to the governing party. The Prime Minister is a retired brigadier general, Mark Phillips, who leads the Covid-19 Task Force and oversees the energy and government information portfolios. He is Afro-Guyanese like Sam Hinds, who served as Prime Minister from 1992-2015 in the previous PPP/C government.⁸ The administration's goal is to shed its party's previous reputation for corruption and influence by its relationship with China.

This Assessment considers the following DRG elements in order of priority: competition and political accountability, consensus, inclusion, government responsiveness and effectiveness, and rule of law and human rights.

Competition and political accountability: Political competition is dominated by the two main parties, the PPP/C party, which is predominantly Indo-Guyanese, and the APNU+AFC coalition. The APNU+AFC coalition is comprised of the People's National Congress (PNC), a predominantly Afro-Guyanese party, the Alliance for Change (AFC), a multi-ethnic party, and a number of smaller political parties.

⁷ From 2015 to 2020, Guyana has marginally improved its ranking in the Human Development Index from 127 to 122. hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/rankings.pdf

⁸ Hinds himself came from the Civic Party, which allied itself with PPP to contest the 1992 elections. The Civic Party emerged from reform discussions a number of smaller parties in discussions on reform with PPP following allegations of fraud in the 1985 elections.

Political power is highly centralized in the executive branch of government that reinforces a one-party rule dominated by a single ethnic group. Institutions not affiliated with the executive branch are weak and do not have a strong tradition of ensuring government accountability. Additionally, the country's region-based proportional system for representation in the National Assembly often makes lawmakers more accountable to party leaders rather than to constituents in their regions. Government accountability hinges a great deal on how it handles electoral reform and whether meaningful steps are taken to empower local officials.

Consensus: National consensus on critical development and economic issues seems elusive due to the prolonged political instability that has widened the political and racial divide within Guyana. Although both political parties have a shared commitment to a democratic system there is no clear consensus for necessary electoral and institutional reforms and stewardship of Guyana's national wealth. It is incumbent on political leaders and citizens to reach across the racial and ethnic divide to come to a common vision of a new national development plan. The lack of political agreement regarding policy priorities for economic opportunities and social benefits perpetuates long standing disparities in the country.

Inclusion: Access to social and economic resources has varied depending on which political party is dominant in the political cycle. The parties derive their support from distinct ethnic blocks of voters, which often pits Indo-Guyanese against Afro-Guyanese. This political favoritism towards one ethnic group is especially worrisome as Guyana is on the cusp of unprecedented economic transformation. Vulnerable populations, rural and hinterland residents, along with the LGBTQI population have been excluded from meaningful engagement in political life and policymaking.

Government responsiveness and effectiveness: The new government has a strong interest in projecting political stability that is supported by a constitutionally legitimate and internationally recognized government. The first challenge for the new government was its responsiveness to the Covid-19 pandemic, which revealed that Guyana's very limited healthcare infrastructure cannot serve most citizens outside of Georgetown, the country's capital. The government promised nearly GYD4.5 billion in relief to help the population cope with the economic consequences of the pandemic, but the equitable distribution of the relief is far from transparent. The government also must address illegal gold mining and increasing criminality of gangs and drug cartels operating in the hinterlands of the country.

Rule of Law and human rights: Guyana has ratified eleven human rights treaties and incorporated their obligations into national legislation in the following areas: education, preventing gender violence, medical termination of pregnancy, Indigenous People's rights, child protection, equal right to property, family and parenting rights, employment and social security, and labor. The enforcement and application of these laws is anemic and uneven across race, ethnicity and geographic location. Indigenous populations suffer from insecure land tenure and require the approval of the Minister of Amerindian Affairs for various legal protections to be effective. Legal and societal discrimination remains high for LGBTQI persons; laws criminalize consensual sexual relations between adult men.⁹ Domestic abuse is widespread, and conviction rates for such abuse and for sexual offenses are low. Harsh prison conditions are also cited as human rights violations in many global indices. For example, there were 1,761 prisoners in seven facilities that were designed for 1505 prisoners, in addition to a court system backlog that had caused a 30 percent rate of pre-trial detention.¹⁰

⁹ Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2019 United States Department of State • Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor

¹⁰ <https://www.state.gov/reports/2020-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/>

ASSESSMENT APPROACH

The assignment involved two interconnected tasks. First, the assessment portion of the task defines the core DRG problems in the country, identifies the interests, incentives and resources of key actors and institutions that could promote or inhibit progress, and considers the United States Government's (USG's) operational and programmatic environment in Guyana. This portion also examines positive and negative trends in opening policy space in Guyana to foster democratic development as Guyana emerges as an oil-producing nation and is poised for transformational economic growth. The research and analysis include coverage of issues related to political structures; ethnic relations; oversight of policy implementation; national-subnational relations; and the role of public integrity agencies. Second, the strategy development segment presents clear and actionable strategic and programmatic recommendations to address the core DRG problems identified in the assessment portion.

This assessment is based on USAID's DRG Strategic Assessment Framework (revised in October 2014), along with the accompanying Guidance to Assessment Teams. The seven assessment questions detailed in the research plan will be answered in the normal course of applying the Framework.

1. What are the key problems and opportunities in each of the five elements of the USAID DRG Framework—consensus; inclusion; competition and political accountability; rule of law and human rights; and government responsiveness and effectiveness? How are these problems interconnected?
2. What are the key problems and opportunities in the following areas:
 - a. Competition and political accountability
 - b. Consensus and inclusion
 - c. Civil society
 - d. Youth engagement
3. Given the SAF, what are the root causes of the problems?
4. Given the problems identified, what and how are the key actors and institutions (including formal and informal norms, relationships, and rules of the game) influencing those problems, or providing solutions/opportunities? Which actors are the key opponents/proponents of reform?
5. Which of the problems are the most amenable to change in the next five years and why? Of those areas with the greatest opportunities, where could USG assistance be most effective?
6. What is USAID/ESC's comparative advantage in supporting the DRG sector, considering USG priorities and resources, and other stakeholders working in this sector?
7. What DRG-related areas have potential sustainability within the next five years (if any), and what would be an exit strategy for USAID in those areas?

Questions 1-4 are answered through a combination of the analysis in Steps 1 and 2 and Annex C, which contains a detailed discussion of the key actors and institutions. Questions 5-7 are answered in the analyses found in Step 3 and Step 4.

Guyana's political economy and socio-cultural context provide the settings for this DRG assessment. Its origins, history, cultural foundations, and other contextual factors provide nuanced information that assists the Assessment Team to analyze the DRG elements and identify the associated DRG challenges, as well as the structural constraints, opportunities, and interests of key actors who can promote or hinder political reform in a country. The central premise of the team's approach to this exercise was that the broader context of consensus and inclusion are the underlying challenges for Guyanese citizens and impede the framing of a common vision of the country's future. The ruling PPP/C and the opposition

APNU+AFC need to find a way to form a functioning democracy based on power-sharing rather than a “winner-takes-all” mentality. This would ensure that the unprecedented wealth from oil reserves can be transparently and equitably managed for the benefit of all Guyanese.

METHODOLOGY

The data analysis was based on the SAF and entailed four steps:

Step 1: The team identified the key DRG problems by analyzing the country context, state institutions and policy directions of the country. The analysis addressed five elements of the political system in whole or in part: inclusion; administrative effectiveness and accountability; consensus; rule of law; and competition and political accountability. The team also prioritized the identified problems to guide resource allocation or, when the primary problem could not be productively addressed, to clarify second-best options.

Step 2: The assessment team examined the role of key actors together with the institutions that structure their incentives, focusing on actors that are most relevant to the DRG problems detailed in Step 1. The team identified proponents and opponents of specific reforms, along with the resources they can mobilize, then used this political economy analysis of the stakeholders (and the recent Political Economy Analysis report) to evaluate the feasibility of promoting selected aspects of democratic governance. Step 2 concluded with the identification of opportunities, or lack thereof, for supporting actors and institutions to address the key DRG problems.

Step 3: The review considered, ethnic relations; informal networks and national-subnational relations; societal engagement; and the role of public integrity agencies. The team also considered practical constraints on the recipient side. This information served as a filter to remove strategic or programmatic options that fall outside the focus or capabilities of USAID/ESC and highlighted those that are a good fit with the RDCS that guides the USAID/Guyana’s strategy

Step 4: Based on the analysis in steps 1-3, the team developed recommendations for potential strategy and programming development. The recommendations include a hierarchy of DRG objectives, possible approaches and illustrative activities, along with a development hypothesis and set of assumptions that explain how the recommended course addresses the identified governance problems.

The DRG Strategic Assessment Framework is a structured inquiry designed to provide both latitude and limits to assessment exercises. The four steps in the Framework are not intended to be sequential or linear. Rather, the first three steps are primarily analytical filters. Step 1, identifying the key DRG problems, began before and continued into fieldwork, guiding the depth and focus of the team’s data collection that led to the Step 2 analysis of stakeholders. Steps 1 and 2 tend to be iterative, producing ever-deeper knowledge of problems and the political economy of reform. Put through the filter of USAID’s operational and programmatic environment in Step 3, the analyses from Steps 1 and 2 generated preferential strategies and programming considerations. Based on this analysis, the team produced a set of actionable strategic and programmatic recommendations in Step 4 to inform the Mission’s programmatic strategies.

As noted previously, the analytical narrative that follows does not cover the entire process of iterations. The team applied the four basic steps of the Framework but adapted them to focus more on the stakeholder analysis in the second step after discussions with USAID staff in Guyana, ESC, and Washington.

The resulting analytical narrative of this report is intended to focus the reader's attention on support for or opposition to potential opportunities for increasing competition and political accountability while building national consensus. The details of actors and institutions are provided in Annex C for reference.

The assessment team collected data primarily through a review of relevant literature and USG and implementing partner documents, and key informant interviews. The team identified key topics for particular attention in the desk review: electoral system reforms, public integrity institutions, civil society and private sector, and economic growth projections. The team conducted 92 interviews including 29 in 5 of the 10 regions in addition to meetings with USAID/Guyana staff. The key informant list in Annex A contains a breakdown of key informants by category of affiliation and the number of respondents located outside the capital of Georgetown.

The table below lists the members of the DRG Assessment Team. Extended biographies may be found in Annex D.

Member	Role	Expertise
Brenda Lee Pearson	Team Leader	DRG program implementation and assessments, USAID performance evaluations
Candice Ramessar	Country Expert	Governance, gender equality, inclusive development, environment
Remi Anderson	Political Analyst	Guyana and Caribbean political systems, migration
Catherine Martin	Administrative Assistance	Logistics and scheduling

ANALYSIS

Guyana's democratic experience, albeit relatively young, and within the overarching context of a plural society, presents multiple challenges and implications for arriving at compromises, building consensus, and realizing conciliation in pursuit of democratic transition. The team began from the perspective that the fundamental DRG issue in Guyana is the weak competition and political accountability in its governing structures that will be severely tested in the coming years due to the unprecedented oil reserves discovered off its shores. Current estimates project that the government's share of earnings from oil could reach between \$9.5 – \$10 billion annually, which is a staggering sum for a small, sparsely populated country like Guyana. The surge in oil-generated government revenues presents enormous opportunities for economic expansion and resolving systemic development challenges. Oil wealth, however, tends to corrode political institutions that are already weak and without broad-based support.

The accountability gap is most readily seen in the DRG elements of Competition and Political Accountability, Consensus, and Inclusion. While Guyana's history, cultural diversity and size make the country unique in South America, these factors also pose challenges to cohesive and inclusive development as topics of national interest are usually distorted through individual racial, ethnic, and political lenses. Consensus and Inclusion have their own dynamics but wield a powerful influence on the ability to govern, which impacts Government Responsiveness and Effectiveness.

It is critical that Guyanese achieve consensus on the conceptual, structural, management and oversight functions of the state to ensure equitable distribution of the dividends of the expected economic boom and to mitigate the risk of corruption. The government must develop an open and transparent process to plan and operationalize the fiscal and legislative framework of the Sovereign Wealth Fund (SWF), by consensus, to subvert corruption and theft of the expected funds and ensure equitable distribution of the expected revenue. As noted earlier, the country's political parties are predominately ethnically homogeneous, exacerbating racial and ethnic tensions. Regarding Human Rights and Rule of Law, the team viewed this DRG element as a cross-cutting theme present in all DRG elements.

Establishment of the *Natural Resource Fund*

The transformation of a small country such as Guyana through large oil discoveries will be historic, with some experts referring to Guyana as potentially the “new Qatar or Malaysia” of South America. Part of the challenge will be to avoid the “resource curse,” a malady which has left many countries rich in oil and gas resources (such as Angola, Venezuela, Nigeria, and others) with authoritarianism, corruption, and poverty. The predominant challenge is to wisely manage this new wealth by carefully planning a sensible development strategy, ensuring that wealth is not misappropriated by a few, but shared equitably with the entire population and with future generations of Guyanese.

To manage the oil revenues, a *Natural Resource Fund (NRF)*, a type of Sovereign Wealth Fund (SWF) was created in 2019 to absorb excess revenue that cannot be spent effectively in the short term. SWFs established in other countries generally invest revenues in foreign financial assets, enabling the country's natural resource wealth to generate consistent returns across generations. Resource rich countries establish SWFs that are aligned with the international best practices for sovereign wealth funds known as the “Santiago principles.” While the current *NRF* is largely aligned to the Santiago principles, it was approved by Parliament in 2018, in the absence of the opposition parliamentarians. The new administration is revisiting contracts and transactions by the previous government and has stated its commitment to introduce new *NRF* legislation.

The *NRF Act* mandates the accumulation of assets in the fund even if the government continues to borrow, and it does not entail a debt ceiling or otherwise limit public borrowing. The *NRF Act* also provides for a Macroeconomic Committee, Investment Committee and Public Accountability and Oversight Committee to advise the Minister of Finance and stipulates that advice will be made public as part of the minister's report to the legislature. As of May 2021, since the government intends to introduce new legislation, steps have not been taken to appoint members of

these three committees, which should make investment recommendations to the National Assembly. One shortcoming of the *NRF Act* is the rigidity of the legislation that does not allow for withdrawals to counter economic downturns unrelated to such disasters as the current pandemic.

The US Geological Survey estimates that the Guyanese coastal area holds recoverable oil reserves of roughly 13.6 billion barrels and gas reserves of 32 trillion cubic feet. ExxonMobil, the majority partner in a consortium including Hess and CNOOC, began producing oil in December 2019. Projected production for 2020 stands at 120,000 barrels of oil per day, with the potential for production of more than 750,000 barrels of oil per day by 2025.

Guyana's GDP is expected to increase significantly in 2021 because of its first exports of oil. The country is expected to have an average annual growth of 28 percent between 2020 and 2024, doubling its GDP to \$8.1 billion and per capita income to over \$10,000 over the same period. The World Bank estimates total fiscal revenues from the country's first two oilfields are projected to exceed \$20 billion annually, which is five times Guyana's GDP of \$4 billion in 2018. Guyana is projected to be among the world's largest per-capita oil producers by 2025 and has the potential of becoming one of the wealthiest countries per capita in the hemisphere within the next generation.

FIVE DRG ELEMENTS & STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

The accountability gap is most readily seen in the DRG elements of Competition and Political Accountability, Consensus, and Inclusion. While Guyana's history, cultural diversity, and size make the country unique in South America, these factors also pose challenges to cohesive and inclusive development as topics of national interest are usually distorted through individual racial, ethnic, and political lenses. Consensus and Inclusion have their own dynamics, but wield a powerful influence on the ability to govern, which impacts Government Responsiveness and Effectiveness. As noted earlier, Guyana's political parties are predominately ethnically homogeneous, exacerbating racial and ethnic tensions. Regarding Human Rights and Rule of Law, the team viewed this element as a cross-cutting theme present in all elements.

For the equitable distribution of the dividends of the expected economic boom and to prevent exploitation by multinational corporations, it is critical that Guyanese achieve consensus on the conceptual, structural, management and oversight functions of the state. The government must develop an open and transparent process of planning and operationalization of the SWF. There also needs to be a fiscal and legislative framework by consensus to subvert corruption and ensure equitable distribution of the expected funds.

Competition and Political Accountability

Political power continues to be concentrated in the executive branch of government as it was during the period covered by the previous 2016 DRG Assessment Report. The unicameral National Assembly of 65 seats has 40 members directly elected in a single nationwide constituency and 25 elected directly in multi-seat constituencies, all of them by closed list proportional representation vote. The ethnic identity of the two major political parties is reinforced by the country's region-based proportional system for representation in the National Assembly, which makes lawmakers directly accountable to party leaders rather than to constituents in their regions. In this electoral system, it is difficult to forge inclusive policies that are in the national interest.

The parties compete in a mixed electoral system that combines proportional representation with first-past-the-post voting: forty of the National Assembly's 65 seats are elected by proportional representation in a single nationwide district, the remaining 25 are elected by proportional representation at the regional constituency level, and the president is the nominee of the party or electoral coalition with the most overall votes; note that it is possible that the president could be of a different party than the government, which occurred between 2011-2015. Broad constitutional reforms have been under consideration since

2001, which would include electoral reforms. These proposed reforms, however, have not been fully elaborated and legislated, contributing to a lack of confidence in the efficacy of the electoral system.




There are no explicit barriers to political participation and competition but to be registered in an election, all parties must present a candidate list of sixty-five members, a signature list of 300 registered voters, and have at least thirteen candidates contest in six of the country's ten regional constituencies.

The larger political parties have a distinct financial advantage. There is no legislation in place that limits or mandates the disclosure of financial contributions made to the political parties, and as a result of this political rewards for sizeable donations are rampant in the system. Rent seeking and various forms of clientelism and patronage undermine good governance and exacerbate political corruption. The PPP/C has traditionally relied on the support of the private sector and private media, which have been dominated by Indo-Guyanese. The APNU+AFC has been less effective in using the media as a bully pulpit.

Smaller political parties are at a distinct disadvantage because of the current party registration thresholds, because the country's poor infrastructure makes national campaigning very expensive for smaller parties with limited financing; this is as true for parties representing indigenous Guyanese as it is for capital- or urban-based small parties. The proliferation of smaller political parties during the 2015 and 2020 election cycles has provides an incentive for forming electoral coalitions. Given the closeness of these two recent elections, smaller parties can have an impact on election outcomes.

Guyana's political landscape is sharply divided along ethnic lines (for an overview of the main parties, see Figure 1 below). Afro-Guyanese comprise about 30 percent of the population and predominantly support the Partnership for National Unity (APNU) and the Alliance for Change (AFC). The APNU (a coalition between the PNC and a number of smaller parties) formed a pre-election coalition with the AFC to win the 2015 elections. A margin of only 4,506 votes separated the winner from the loser. This was the first coalition slate to win a national election and it brought some hope that the zero-sum nature of the winner-take-all system would be tempered. After losing the 2020 election, two of the smaller parties withdrew from this alliance.

Figure 1: Main Political Parties in Guyana

	Alliance For Change (AFC): Established in 2015 by former members of the Peoples National Congress and Peoples Progressive Party the party consisted of prominent members of civil society, the private sector and community activist. Considered Guyana's second genuine multi-ethnic party after the Working Peoples Alliance.
	Peoples National Congress Reform (PNC-R): Established in 1957 as a result of split of the Peoples Progressive Party (PPP) along ethnic lines. The party is the main opposition and formed the government for 28 years after independence in 1966. The party's main base is Afro-Guyanese from urban and rural areas. The party lost the seat of government in 1992 and joined with the AFC and several smaller parties in a coalition and was returned to government in 2015. A no-confidence vote and resultant national elections led to it being ousted in March 2020.
	Peoples Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C): Guyana's oldest political party whose support base is Indo-Guyanese. The "C" was added in 1990 in an electoral alliance with a new "Civic Party" that emerged from discussions by smaller parties with the PPP over reform in the wake of alleged fraud in the 1985 elections; the main Civic personality was Sam Hinds, and the party itself was absorbed by the PPP over the new few years. The party holds 33 of the 65 seats in the National Assembly and forms the government. It was the ruling party for 23 years from 1992-2015.

The 2020 election was characterized by ethnic mobilization but somewhat moderated by the need to reach across ethnic lines given the closeness of the previous election. Indo-Guyanese comprise about 40 percent of the population and are the main supporters of the ruling PPP/C In the 2020 elections, the

PPP/C won 50.69 percent of the vote while the APNU+AFC won 47.34 percent of the vote. There is also a higher migration of Indo-Guyanese, which is a factor in the competition in recent elections. The 2020 election produced 72.5 percent voter turnout, which matched the previous highest turnout of 72 percent in 2015.

The prolonged political impasse in 2020 highlighted weaknesses in the political accountability for ensuring fair and free elections. The capacity of GECOM to serve as a neutral and effective overseer of the procedural aspects of the system was called into question because of the concerns regarding voter lists, voter registration, diaspora voting, vote-buying, and enforcement of campaign finance laws. Guyanese on both sides of the political aisle believe the integrity of GECOM has been severely compromised. The composition of GECOM's Commission is based on recommendations from the Carter Center that were developed to address an earlier similar political crisis in the 1990s. The seven-member commission is composed of three representatives each from the two dominant party alliances, the PPP/C and APNU+AFC. The chair is appointed by the President with agreement by the leader of the opposition. Smaller political parties would like to see a mandated set-aside seat for their representation on the commission. The current Chief Executive Officer, Mr. Keith Lowenfield, and other staff of GECOM's Secretariat face charges of alleged electoral fraud from the 2020 Presidential election process.

Local elections were held in 2016 and 2018 during the APNU+AFC government elected in the 2015 elections. The current PPP/C government has announced its intent to hold local elections in 2021, but has publicly expressed its lack of trust in leadership of the GECOM secretariat and an unwillingness to go into an election without changes of that leadership. A formal date is still to be announced for the election raising concerns that local government elections might not be held this year.

The legal structure for local government is strong but the way it manifests in practice is not responsive or politically competitive. Local government elections are mandated in Chapter VII, Section 7.1 of the constitution, which states that *"local government is a vital aspect of democracy and shall be organized to involve the people in the task of managing and developing the communities in which they live."* For example, local elections are supposed to be biannual but were held only once between 1992-2015. In the absence of regularly held elections, a system of Interim Management Committees and Community Development Councils (CDCs) gradually took root. These structures do not have widespread support, and many had seen their use as strategic tools to influence and therefore politicize targeted municipalities and communities outside the Executive's traditional support base.

A second factor influencing competition and political accountability relates to Guyana becoming one of the wealthiest countries per capita in the Southern Hemisphere within the next generation. This tremendous influx of money opens many avenues for corruption. Any lack of transparency and public engagement could undermine trust in public institutions. Guyana's score on Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index remains below those of oil-rich countries; Guyana decreased in rank from 85 to 83 from 2019 to 2020. An additional issue is that the limited effectiveness of the public sector undermines the country's public finance management system, ability to advance Guyana's development objectives and predictability of public service delivery.

The private sector can be both a positive and negative agent for change. The business community reports high incidences of bureaucratic red tape particularly in the procurement of land and other regulatory procedures. The Government of Guyana is pursuing an electronic single window system with assistance from the IDB through which procedures, regulations, and advice about incentives to investments in key areas of the country can be sought and accessed. International companies have reported instances in which local business concerns shut out foreign direct investment that threatens their current gains within the

unregulated informal economy. Tenders are often short circuited and diverted locally rather than awarded to competitive offers from non-Guyanese companies.

The main challenges to political accountability in Guyana remain low human capacity, poor oversight and enforcement, and few entry points for meaningful political engagement by Guyanese citizens who are not members of the main political parties and living in Georgetown and its proximity. CSOs and media tend to be tradition-bound and susceptible to political influences; this will be further elaborated in the political economy section.

“Yes, there is competition but between two top players.” - Party member

“Major problem I see has been amplified in recent months - if you chose the wrong side, you don’t have anywhere to go in this country. If you do get into politics, you do with some trepidation and risk taking.” - Civil society leader

” Private sector can and should be the watchdog for government investments and public expenditures...showing positive reinforcement and sharing best practices...we can be like Norway or Venezuela....I want Norway.” - Private Sector Leader

Consensus

Guyana will continue to face unstable socio-cultural and governance conditions until ethnic inclusion in the decision-making process is institutionalized. Like many other countries in the region, the Guyanese national identity is shaped by the experience of its people’s unique mix of language, religion, and culture that produced a multiethnic identity over time. Guyana is a multiethnic state called the “Land of Many Waters” that is a mosaic of predominantly English-speaking people, although indigenous populations primarily speak indigenous languages. Political party control of the security institutions, rewriting the constitution, and regular manipulations of elections was the pattern from 1964 until the early 1990s, which also accounts for the large emigration of educated Guyanese who were discriminated against by the country’s ruling elites. This history is important in understanding why both Afro-Guyanese and Indo-Guyanese feared complete marginalization at different historical junctures. Distrust and underlying conflict broke to the surface in 1992, 1997, and 2001 and contributed to crime waves of ethno-criminal and extrajudicial violence.

The deep distrust of the party in government by the opposition has not changed much in the past five years. Stakeholders interviewed for this assessment, across social groups, continuously referred to the ethnic political divisions as the major threat to political consensus. The inability to achieve consensus is often seen as originating from post-colonial ethnic divisions and the politics of grievance, although key youth informants (under 35 years old¹¹) did not dwell on the identity politics of their parents’ generation. The post-election violence after the 2020 election seemed sadly familiar to many stakeholders and was emblematic of deepening ethnic polarization. “Oil revenues are likely to entrench Guyana’s divisions and its long-standing ethnic identity politics,” noted one observer.¹²

Post-election violence following the March 2020, elections contributed to entrenched ethnic-politicized perceptions of the legitimacy of the election and drove a wedge around the process of building consensus across the nation. The elections were cast as a battle to control oil revenues, but served only to further division and weaken consensus. The previous APNU+AFC administration’s lack of transparency in the negotiation and terms of oil and gas agreements with ExxonMobil and other international investors

¹¹ People between the ages of 15-35 are designated as youth according to the 2015 National Youth Policy of Guyana.

¹² Key informant interviews conducted in February 2021.

undermined public confidence and led to allegations of corruption and calls for more transparency. An opportunity was missed to build consensus around the significance of the country's oil and gas wealth.

Voter turnout of 70 percent in 2015 and 2020 indicates that a large majority of Guyanese citizens value an open political system and rule of law that benefits the country. Political parties in Guyana do not differ much in their economic or political ideology but tend to reflect the economic and geographical interests in their constituencies.¹³ Poor infrastructure and internet connectivity in Guyana isolates people that reside outside of Georgetown. This is an inclusion problem but has a consensus effect. The lack of ability to engage outside the capital means that citizens residing in different regions of the country have very different experiences, which in turn influences their attitudes about what government should do.

Due to their geographical diffusion and isolation, there is not a strong indigenous political party yet, but key informant interviews revealed that this segment of the population view themselves as important swing voters. Lack of internet in hinterland and rural communities creates a sense of detachment as people cannot access information on public policies nor provide household or community-level inputs to government policies and public services affecting them. This coupled with the high cost of travelling to Georgetown reduces peoples' affinity to government and governance in Guyana.

Chapter 2 in the Constitution of Guyana expresses a commitment to democratic values with the objective of an inclusive democracy and provision of increasing opportunities for the participation of citizens in the decision-making processes of the state. Despite this constitutional provision, there are continued challenges to achieving consensus. During the "cohabitation" period of 2011-2015, major pieces of legislation passed by the opposition-controlled Assembly languished without signature by the president.

The National Assembly, a possible mechanism for initiating reform discussions and formalizing power-sharing, has been combative at best. The 2020 parliamentary sessions commenced with Members of Parliament (MPs) trading verbal personal insults rather than engaging in civilized discourse on matters of national importance. Parliamentary decision-making could promote consensus building and compromise, but it only exacerbates the political divide. The United Nations, in a statement, succinctly captured the role of parliament in contributing to consensus in Guyana, "...Parliament is the supreme institution of citizen representation. When the margin between the government and the opposition is one or two seats, parliamentary decision-making should entail consensus-building and compromise to be inclusive of all Guyanese citizens."¹⁴

Guyana's weak governing structures and the low professional capacity of public sector officials at all levels affects racial tensions and conflict and therefore consensus-building. Ethnic rivalry, buttressed by weak institutions, continues to produce less than optimal development outcomes for Guyana.¹⁵ In 2015, the coalition government attempted to institutionalize social cohesion as a way of bridging gaps between ethnicities and social groups and promote attempts in plurality. The proposed socially cohesive programs by the then-government were undermined by political conflict between the parties. For example, the Ethnic Relations Commission (ERC) has the constitutional mandate and a significant annual budget allocation to keep it free from political interference, but internal fighting amongst members from different parties make it ill-equipped to lead reconciliation efforts between the main political parties.

Not surprisingly, Guyanese have mixed responses regarding a common vision for Guyana's future beyond basic democratic principles. In interviews, various groups of civil society and the private sector expressed

¹³ Carter Center report "2015 General and Regional Elections in Guyana."

¹⁴ <https://www.stabroeknews.com/2020/10/24/news/guyana/u-n-resident-co-ordinator-stresses-consensus-building-in-parliament/>

¹⁵ Khemraj 2015

a desire for a more equitable society where everyone has a share in the country's wealth. Others expressed the desire for a more representative system of governance and decentralization of public services to regional and local bodies. As one respondent stated:

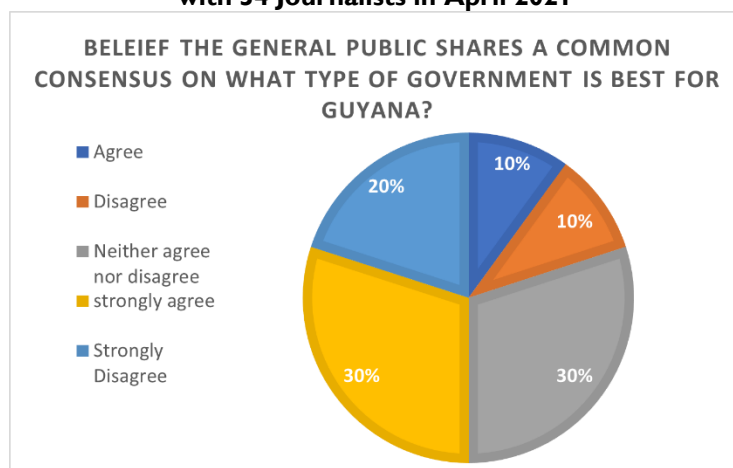
“Everybody would have a different perspective. What we need is an understanding of that perspective. Many of us here now were born into this system of governance. We don't know anything else. Technically, we can look, and we can see things on television, or you see things in other places. But we don't know the reality of that. We have lived with one type of governance. So to suggest a different type of model would be better is unknown because we have no idea if it would work. We don't know. I don't know.” Civil Society leader.

Guyana has few private and public traditional media outlets but a thriving media presence on social media platforms. The government-owned newspaper, *Guyana Chronicle*, and national television station, *National Communications Network (NCN)*, have national coverage. Two national newspapers, *Kaieteur News* and *Stabroek News*, are privately owned. Government-controlled radio monopolies ended in 2012 with the granting of private radio licenses. In 2016, further licenses were granted to private radio broadcasters by the then APNU+AFC government. Accusations of political favoritism followed both the 2012 and 2016 granting of licenses. The two non-state national newspapers are generally viewed as being impartial, however, because of its coverage of governance issues related to the nascent oil and gas industry, *Kaieteur News* has been deemed anti-foreign investment and, at times, anti-government.

New media consists of such online news outlets as *Demerara Waves*, *Inews Guyana*, *Newsroom* and the *Village Voice*, some of which are affiliated with print newspapers and TV stations. Social media such as *Facebook*, *Instagram*, *Twitter*, and *YouTube* (featuring *Guyana Uncut*) are used to disseminate news and opinions. Very few of the new media outlets are independent but rather aligned to one of the two major political parties. The new media outlets grew exponentially in the lead-up to the 2020 elections and played a major role in information dissemination and disinformation. They have been accused of contributing to ethnic strife through their disinformation campaigns. New media is particularly influential among the youth and urban populations but also made significant inroads into all segments of the Guyanese population.

According to a media survey conducted by the Assessment Team, less than 20 percent of journalists interviewed either strongly or somewhat agreed that there is a common consensus among Guyanese for the best type of government for Guyana (see Figure 2 below).

Figure 2: Findings from Electronic and Telephone Surveys Conducted Remotely and Face-to-Face with 34 Journalists in April 2021

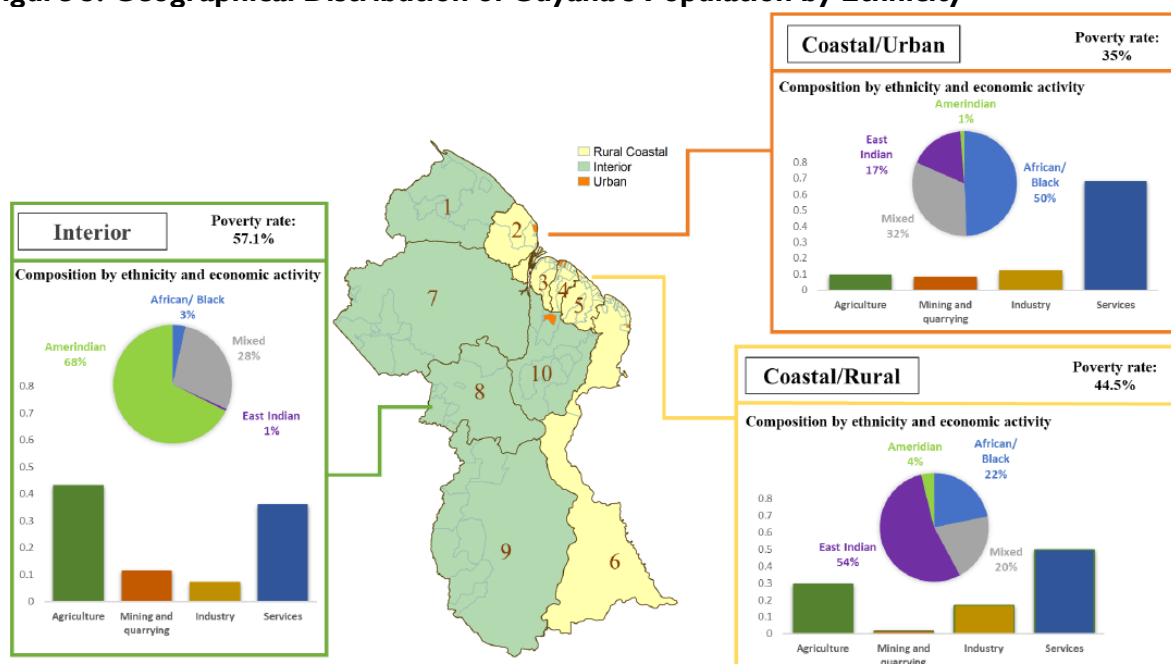


Inclusion

Ethnic fragmentation continues to be a threat to inclusion and poses risks to social and political stability. Guyana's continued focus on infrastructure and services that are limited to Georgetown and narrow coastal plain affects the distribution of political power and access to public services. Georgetown, the capital, is the seat of administration of political power and development activities have been largely centered there. As a result, access to public services favors residents in Georgetown. There is a sharp decrease in both political influence and the quality and availability of public services outside of Georgetown. Geographical inequalities perpetuate a system of patronage, where inclusion and access are often dependent on physical proximity to central power. Indigenous populations and rural citizens outside of Georgetown are acutely affected by poor infrastructure and unreliable delivery of public services.

There were attempts by the APNU+AFC administration to decentralize some public services such as passport processing. Passport offices were opened in Region - 10 and Region - 6 to ease persons from those regions traveling to Georgetown to obtain passports. There was some decentralization of the services of the National Insurance Scheme. However, these initiatives do not adequately address the widening gap of access to critical services between Georgetown and the outlying areas.

Figure 3: Geographical Distribution of Guyana's Population by Ethnicity



Reference: World Bank Group 2020¹⁶

The complexities of inclusion in Guyana are worsened by the nation's unfavorable perceptions of public institutions. Mutual distrust among citizens is perpetuated through ethnic voting blocks. There is anecdotal evidence collected through key interviews that political polarization extends to friction on the issue of inclusion in the police force and army. Figure 3 shows the geographical distribution of Guyana's population by ethnicity, where the highest concentration of indigenous people live in the interior, while Indo-Guyanese and Afro-Guyanese are concentrated along the coast.

¹⁶ World Bank Group 2020, *A Pivotal Moment for Guyana : Realizing the Opportunities - Systematic Country Diagnostic (English)*. Washington, D.C. : World Bank Group. <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/691761607528494981/A-Pivotal-Moment-for-Guyana-Realizing-the-Opportunities-Systematic-Country-Diagnostic>

Uncertainty about participation in political, social, and economic life continues to vary depending on which party is dominant in the political cycle. The APNU+AFC has accused the PPP/C government of discrimination in its firing of public servants since the PPP/C took office in August 2020. Stakeholders consulted during this assessment identified Afro-Guyanese, indigenous peoples, and youths as the groups most affected by economic exclusion. The expected windfall from oil revenues coupled with ethnic-centered political parties has heightened resource competition. The heightened resource competition has led to maneuverings by actors for positions in the public and private sectors and resultant claims of exclusion.

In his inauguration speech, President Ali stated, “You will have a Government that is accessible and one that will be more than willing to share information with you as we work on building our Guyana in the interest of all.”¹⁷ The government has conducted extensive consultations with communities and civil society bodies, which some stakeholders have seen as a positive move. Though lauded in some quarters, many of the government’s outreach efforts were held primarily in communities where the PPP/C enjoys deep political support. Since his inauguration President Ali has however not met with the Leader of the Opposition, and has conditioned any such meeting on the opposition’s recognition of the PPP/C as the legitimate winner of the 2020 election.

“Inclusive and responsible development in all sectors (IT, infrastructure, energy, health, education) will build consensus and reduce political polarization—we have the means to do it now.”
– Government Leader

“We all agree that we want a government chosen by all of the people of Guyana.”
– Civil Society Leader

One positive development is the PPP/C government’s new initiatives to improve the quality of life of Guyanese outside of the capital and bring better social services to all regions of the country. The Ministry of Human Services and Social Security is conducting a review of social protection legislation and updating social protection policies, relevant to vulnerable groups including the elderly, women and children, to internationally acceptable standards. The government also stated its commitment to inclusive development goals in the areas of education, health, housing, infrastructure, and decentralization of service delivery and revenue collection. In the area of education, two new modern schools are being built outside of Georgetown under the World Bank-funded Guyana Secondary School Education Improvement Project. Also, the Ministry of Education has developed “Smart Classrooms” to bridge the gap between schools in Georgetown and on the coast and rural and hinterland schools.

Due to their isolation, indigenous populations lag far behind in education, health, and other socio-economic indicators compared to all other segments of society.¹⁸ A UNICEF 2017 study on Indigenous women and children in Guyana found that indigenous women and children do not have access to infrastructure and modern living facilities to the same extent as their counterparts who live in the coastal area and the cities. Lack of economic opportunities is also an issue for men and women but particularly women over 35 years of age. High levels of unemployment and lack of economic opportunities lead to male migration away from home to work in the extractive industries of forestry and mining and leaving many households without reliable sources of household income. The Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) shows widespread poverty, with residents in the poorest quintile in hinterland regions (Regions 1, 7, 8, and 9) dominated by indigenous populations.

¹⁷ <https://newsroom.gy/2020/08/02/irfaan-ali-sworn-in-as-ninth-executive-president-says-he-will-not-disappoint-guyanese/>

¹⁸ UNICEF, 2017, Study on Indigenous Women and Children in Guyana.

The governance of indigenous peoples in Guyana consists of a network of national and local actors. At the national level, the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs is the premiere governmental agency responsible for indigenous people's interests. The Ministry of Amerindian Affairs is supported by the sector-specific ministries such as Education, Health, and Social Protection. At the regional levels, the various regional administrations work in tandem with the local structure of village councils. A 2017 UNICEF study illustrated that the boundaries and responsibilities of the various actors are often not clear, and this is further worsened by limited human and resource capacity at the local village levels. The combination of these factors leads to an exclusion of indigenous populations from government policies and practices related to mitigating climate risks.

So numerous indigenous communities do not have access to the internet, which is one medium through which you can access information, which is exactly why for a long time, we have been saying, and calling for respect to be given to our people to provide information in a timely manner that they can absorb, discuss amongst themselves in their own culturally appropriate manner..."
– Civil Society Leader

Since 2007, Guyana's youth unemployment rate has remained high at between 20-28 percent. In some years Guyana's youth unemployment rates were twice the national average. The country is also challenged by the high levels of male dropouts at the secondary level and male enrolment at the tertiary level below rates of female enrolment. At the University of Guyana, 2020 data shows female attendance significantly outnumbers that of males in all faculties except Agriculture and Forestry, Engineering and Technology. Females made up 63.3 percent of the student population compared to 36.7 percent of males. Male youth, therefore, make up a significant proportion of youth not in education, employment or training. Youth unemployment and in particular male youth unemployment is one of the drivers that push youth into crime and violence.¹⁹ Youth who participated in the DRG Assessment interviews reported significant barriers to accessing credit for entrepreneurial activities, which they often preferred over attending tertiary education institutions. Young people are also frustrated by the political and ethnic climate in the country which serves as a push factor for migration for those in search of better opportunities.

The LGBTQI population in Guyana is consistently excluded from meaningful inputs into political life and policymaking. Access to health services, economic opportunities, and protection from law enforcement bodies is difficult and limited. The 2020 United States Department of State report on Human Rights Practices cited the lack of anti-discrimination legislation for "persons of perceived characteristics gender identity or expression, or sex characteristics a continued issue for LGBTQI persons in Guyana."

Government Responsiveness and Effectiveness

The governance structure in Guyana is highly centralized. The national-level centralization of power continues to affect consensus and inclusion. World Bank indicators on government effectiveness fell in 2019 despite showing gains in the previous four years. The integrity of public institutions, including parliament, police and especially the GECOM were severely tested in the past two years and during the Covid-19 pandemic. Only three aspects of doing business in Guyana have improved over the past five years: accessing credit, registering property, and protecting minority investors, while other factors have worsened²⁰ Guyana, for example, lacks the widespread use of electronic systems in its operations, reliable

¹⁹ Youth Unemployment in the Caribbean. (2014). Preliminary findings and policy considerations. World Bank. Retrieved from <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/18999/883620WP0Box385224B00PUBLIC00April02014.pdf;sequence=1>

²⁰ World Bank 2020

transportation and infrastructure.²¹ A decline in government responsiveness is especially concerning since the inflow of foreign direct investment is expected to increase dramatically due to oil and gas exports. To avoid the *oil resource curse*, the government must take concrete actions to manage the projected economic boom and to match citizens' expectations about future oil revenues.²² Guyana does not have a good track record in establishing strong oversight via public institutions.²³

Guyana's natural resources sector, which is poised to be the generator of economic growth, already exhibits signs of governance issues. The gold mining sector is characterized by rent-seeking behavior, landlordism, and high levels of corruption by regulatory institution officers.²⁴ This has been the reality despite the GOG subscribing to international conventions such as the EITI to strengthen governance in extractive industries.

Government accountability continues to be perceived as weak and unaccountable due to noncompliance with Auditor General recommendations²⁵ and alleged government deception regarding major oil deals.²⁶

The 92 respondents from key informant interviews had mixed views about whether the government was being responsive and effective or stalling on needed reforms,

Not surprisingly, Guyanese have mixed responses regarding a common vision for Guyana's future. The various groups of civil society and the private sector expressed uncertainty as to how the government can ensure a more equitable society where everyone has a share in the country's wealth. Some of the respondents in the key informant interviews suggested that government could be more effective and responsive through electoral reforms and decentralization of public services to regional and local bodies.

"Many government services will need to be outsourced until a culture of public service and human capacity is created in the ministries, which are still managed top-down and resistant to change." Donor

"This government talking to everybody. Since they won, they are out and about, and the president is accessible. That is a good sign." Religious Organization

as demonstrated in the two quotes below.

The 2020 World Bank Governance Indicators Report for Guyana raises questions about the GOG's responsiveness and accountability especially considering the 2015 oil reserve discovery. Of the six indicators tracked by the World Bank, Guyana scores over 50 for Voice and Accountability and Control of Corruption. Critically, Guyana ranks very low on Political Stability 38.57; Government Effectiveness 37.50; and Regulatory Effectiveness Guyana 28.85, in which 100 is the highest score. The small population and exodus of skilled workers has created a severe human capital deficit in the public sector.

*"You need far more engineers, economists, and geophysicists... And I know this statement may get me in trouble but half the time you can't even find competent secretaries. But certainly, one of the issues facing Guyana in the oil sector is the need to generate more skills..." said former Foreign Minister Carl Greenidge on April 17, 2021.*²⁷

²¹ World Bank, accessed June 26, 2021, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/IC.BUS.EASE.XQ?locations=GY>

²² Kaiteur News 2020

²³ Kenraj 2016

²⁴ Hilson and Laing, 2016

²⁵ <https://www.kaiteurnewsonline.com/2018/12/11/govt-fails-to-implement-174-of-auditor-generals-recommendations/> - accessed on February 26th, 2021

²⁶ <https://oilnow.gy/featured/transparency-group-accuses-guyana-government-engaging-deception/> - accessed on February 26th, 2021

²⁷ Source: <https://oilnow.gy/featured/guyana-must-accept-it-has-crucial-skills-shortage-for-oil-sector-temper-local-content-expectations-greenidge/>

According to interviews with key stakeholders, including USAID and other donor partners, there are several key areas in which the government has opportunities to improve its responsiveness, effectiveness, and transparency.

The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) of the Parliament of Guyana is meant to ensure transparency, accountability and honesty in the operations of the government. The first chairman, elected by the 12th parliament, was removed recently by a parliamentary vote of no-confidence. Following much disagreement and stand-off between the main political parties a new chairman has since been elected. The key responsibilities of the nine-member commission is to (1) examine the accounts showing the appropriation of the sums granted by the Assembly to meet public expenditures, (2) address key gaps in critical land tenure and land use laws, (3) oversee the functioning of the office of the Auditor General in accordance with the Rules, Policies and Procedures Manual of that office, and (4) appoint a five-member Public Procurement Commission (PPC) who have professional expertise and experience in procurement, legal, financial and administrative matters. This commission also oversees environmental issues, which adversely affect Guyana's indigenous communities. Enforcement of the rules and regulations governing the bidding process will dispel perceptions of inside trading and corruption.

The PPC was established under Article 212 subsection V of the constitution and first constituted in 2016. It is the cornerstone of the framework of institutions and procedures for the control of public procurement. The commission is tasked to monitor public procurement and procedures to ensure that the procurement of goods, services and execution of works are conducted in a fair, equitable, transparent, competitive, and cost-effective manner, according to law, and such policy guidelines as may be determined by the National Assembly. The commissioners serve for three-year terms. The mandate of the Commission which was established in 2016, expired in 2020. The PAC of the Parliament of Guyana is said to have begun its process to identify and nominate members to the PPC, but donors and private sector respondents did not believe the nominating process was moving rapidly.

A new board of the National Procurement and Tender Administration, a procurement body under the Ministry of Finance, was established in accordance with Section 16 (1) of 2003 Procurement Act and the board sworn in during September of 2020. The purpose of the Administration is to facilitate the establishment and implementation of a regulatory environment conducive to transparency, economy, efficiency, openness, fairness, and accountability in public sector procurement. Governance and the application and enforcement of the rule of law is critical in public contracting. Strengthening oversight of the competitive bidding for public contracts process will bring confidence and transparency to the process.

Rule of Law and Human Rights

Guyana has ratified eleven human rights treaties and incorporated their obligations into national legislation in the following areas: education, preventing gender violence, medical termination of pregnancy, Indigenous People's rights, child protection, equal right to property, family and parenting rights, employment and social security and labor. The enforcement and application of the laws is weak and uneven across racial, ethnic lines. Protection of the rights of indigenous people, gender related discrimination violence against women and human trafficking are cited as critical issues needing attention as per the 2020 Freedom House Guyana Country Report. The indigenous population in Guyana constitutes about 10.5 percent of the overall population²⁸ and more than 90 percent of the indigenous population resides in geographically isolated "hinterland" regions with inferior public services including education, health and access to public goods and services. In the World Bank Governance and Rule of Law Indicators, Guyana's aggregated score

²⁸ The indigenous population of 82,913 represents 10.5 percent of the overall population of 789,647, according to the United Nations 2021 Worldometer data.

is 37 in the index as compared to the Latin America and Caribbean region's overall score of 49, with 100 being the highest score.

Despite having laws barring discrimination based on race, gender, and other categories, the application and enforcement are not only not effective but also are spottily enforced. The enforcement and application of laws across Guyana is inconsistent and varies by region. As noted earlier, access to public services, including courts, is uneven across all ten administrative regions. The court administration functions comparatively better in Regions 3, 4, 5 and 6, which means that the application of rule of law very much depends upon people's domicile.

The constitution of the country mandates in Article 127 (1) and (2) that the President with the concurrence of the leader of the opposition appoints the Chancellor of the Judiciary and the Chief Justice. Other judges are appointed by the President on the advice of the Judicial Service Commission. Due to a lack of consensus between the two main parties, since the 2001 amendments to the constitution Guyana has not made substantive appointments of a Chancellor of the Judiciary and Chief Justice, the two most senior judicial appointments. The individuals filling these positions are serving in an acting capacity per Article 127 (2) of the Constitution, which allows for temporary appointments. The five-member Board of the Judicial Service Commission – comprised of the Chief Justice, the Chancellor of the Judiciary, and the chairperson of the Guyana Public Service Union as *ex officio* member, and members appointed by Parliament and appointed by the President – has not been fully appointed since 2017. Part of the appointment process requires parliamentary procedures and hence the collaboration of the two major parties. The present lack of consensus between the two political parties delays the appointment of committee members an establishment of the committee, leaving the judiciary without valid means to appoint lower-level judges or fulfill its other responsibilities.

Public trust in the police force remains low in comparison to other institutions. A 2016 Inter-American Development Bank survey on victimization and crime conducted by the Latin American Public Opinion Project, with over 1000 respondents, found that Guyanese have higher trust in the military and private religious organizations such as temples, churches and mosques than in public institutions such as the police force.²⁹ The Police Service Commission is empowered to select suitably qualified personnel and to exercise disciplinary control over staff. Police recruits tend to be high school graduates with little or no preparation for entering the profession. Several civil society respondents stated that training is needed for the police force to handle the delicate nature of cases involving domestic partner violence in heterosexual and LGBTQI relationships.

The Covid-19 pandemic has also exacerbated the vulnerability of women and youth to domestic violence.³⁰ The increase in intimate partner and domestic violence during the pandemic is strongly correlated to the loss of employment, national orders to stay at home and abuse of drugs and alcohol as coping mechanisms. The concomitant loss of livelihood and inability to provide for the family have exacerbated incidences of abuse. The isolation due to the pandemic and lack of movement has impacted women and youth unequally and they have suffered the increase in domestic and intimate partner violence. Particularly, during the pandemic, victims of intimate partner and domestic abuse are less likely to report their abusers to the relevant authorities for four main reasons: 1) financial and other forms of dependency on the partner or family; 2) less space to safely navigate both the reporting of the abuse and the realizing of a plan to remove themselves (or perpetrator/s) from the abusive home 3) the issue is often viewed as a private or personal

²⁹ <https://publications.iadb.org/en/publication/12813/latin-american-public-opinion-project-victimization-and-crime-survey-guyana>

³⁰ Guyana Women's Health And Life Experiences Survey Report, UN Women Caribbean, 2019. <https://caribbean.unwomen.org/en/materials/publications/2019/11/guyana-womens-health-and-life-experiences-survey-report>

matter where the victims are frequently blamed and 4) the paucity of and severely under-resourced facilities that cater to victims of abuse.

Prior to the pandemic women and girls in Guyana experienced intimate partner violence at a significantly higher rate of 55 percent of surveyed respondents compared to global averages of 1 in 3 women, while 38 percent of respondents had experienced some form of domestic abuse. Given the challenges the pandemic presents, these numbers have increased globally, and Guyana is no exception. Although exact numbers are not yet forthcoming, local institutions report high incidences of persons reaching out for help. The founder of the United Bridge Builders Mission organization noted that “What I’ve seen in the past three weeks would be more typical of the incidents seen in three months.”³¹

“People are slowly accepting gender issues as important; how a society treats women matters.” - Donor

“Some of them [police] can be very helpful, especially if they're new. They are feeling their way they're getting to know the community and so forth. They can work with the communities. Once they get too familiar with some communities, however, you find the problem starts creeping in with them turning a blind eye to certain activities.” Civil Society Leader

Guyana is a Tier One Country in the US Department of State 2020 Trafficking in Persons Report. The country, however, will be severely tested in trying to prevent instances of trafficking, especially given an influx of migrants from Venezuela and other surrounding countries. According to the Department of State report, “human traffickers exploit domestic and foreign victims in Guyana, and traffickers exploit victims from Guyana abroad. Women and children from Guyana, Brazil, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Suriname, and Venezuela become sex trafficking victims in mining communities in the interior and urban areas. The government notes a large increase in the number of trafficking victims from Venezuela. Authorities identified child victims of sex trafficking as well as forced labor in the fast-growing extractive and service industries.”³² In response, Guyana has established an inter-ministerial Trafficking in Persons Task Force consisting of national agencies including those from social services, natural resources, and the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs. . There is an inter-agency referral system for the sharing of information and data and ongoing education and awareness raising conducted in indigenous communities and mining areas. Refugees from Venezuela, particularly women, are vulnerable to abuse and human trafficking.

POLITICAL ECONOMY ANALYSIS³³

This section offers a summary of the political economy analysis of how key actors and the institutions relevant to the five DRG elements (described above) operate and how they are influenced by the structures of each institution and the incentives they create. It considers the extent to which the existing legal frameworks and enabling environment can provide opportunities to support the democratic transition processes within Guyana. As noted in the methodology, the assessment team examined the role of key actors together with the institutions that structure their incentives. The team identified proponents and opponents of democratic reforms, along with the resources they can mobilize, then used this political economy analysis of the stakeholders to evaluate the feasibility of promoting selected aspects of democratic governance. The full political economy analysis can be found in Annex C.

³¹ “COVID-19 ‘lockdown’ triggers spike in domestic violence” April 16th, 2020. <https://guyanachronicle.com/2020/04/16/covid-19-lockdown-triggers-spike-in-domestic-violence/> Accessed on 5/5/2021.

³² <https://www.state.gov/reports/2020-trafficking-in-persons-report/guyana/>

³³ The USAID DRG Assessment amended report template places the discussion of key actors and institutions in Annex C, which is where a more fulsome descriptions can be found.

Political Parties and Electoral Institutions

Guyana has a multi-party system in theory but has been a two-party system in practice. There are no explicit barriers to political participation and competition but to be registered in an election, all parties must present a candidate list of sixty-five members, a signature list of 300 registered voters, and have at least thirteen candidates contest in six of the country's ten regional constituencies, which is the most challenging barrier. Smaller parties, which often originate in the capital or main urban areas, cannot undertake the economic costs to reach potential supporters in the outlying regions to compete successfully in six constituencies. Smaller parties tend to have a concentrated presence in Region 4 (location of capitol) and other regions in proximity and primarily focus on issues of grievance. So while parties can form freely and compete in elections, there is a virtual stranglehold on the political landscape by two major ethnically aligned political parties.

Afro-Guyanese comprise about 30 percent of the population and Indo-Guyanese comprise about 40 percent of the population. Based on the desk review and the expertise of the technical team, the two main political parties are found to engage in identity politics and have promoted a “race first” platform for decades, but due to changing demographics impacted by migration, neither party can gain a clear majority based on race alone. There is also a higher migration of Indo-Guyanese, which is a factor in the competition in recent elections. The closeness of the 2015 and 2020 elections illustrates the diminishing chances of winning without a broad coalition.

The APNU formed a coalition with the AFC to win the 2015 elections with a razor-thin margin of only 4,506 votes over the PPP/C. This was the first coalition slate to win a national election and it brought some hope that the zero-sum nature of the winner-take-all system would be tempered. The disputed election outcome in 2020 also had a very close margin; PPP/C won 50.69 percent of the vote while APNU+AFC won 47.34 percent of the vote. The 2020 election produced 72.5 percent voter turnout, which matched the previous highest turnout of 72 percent in 2015.

Given the consistently high voter turnout, neither party can count on winning by bringing more of their core party supporters to the polls. This explains the proliferation of smaller political parties during the 2015 and 2020 election cycles that forced the two main parties to seek out political partnerships with them. The PPP/C, for example, chose an Afro-Guyanese as its prime minister, which represents a continuing commitment to broader ethnic representation.

Another dynamic that could disrupt the prevailing political polarization is the growing influence of the indigenous population. Due to their geographical disbursement and isolation, there is not a strong Amerindian political party yet, but this segment of the population could become an important swing vote soon. KIs expressed that neither PPP/C nor APNU+AFC has included this population in the formation of policy and practices that address issues of land rights and the environment that affect the indigenous populations. Their isolation and detachment reduce their affinity to government and governance in Guyana. They are not beholden to any political party or leader.

Guyana Election Commission (GECOM)

Elections are administered by the GECOM, which is headed by the Chair and six Commissioners and has operational and administrative functions executed through a Secretariat. The composition of the Commission is based on recommendations from the Carter Center that were developed to address an earlier, similar political crisis in the 1990s. The seven-member commission is comprised of three representatives each from the two dominant party alliances, the PPP/C and APNU+AFC. The chair is appointed by the President with agreement by the leader of the opposition. The 2020 prolonged political

impasse highlighted weaknesses in the political accountability for ensuring fair and free elections. Public mistrust in GECOM is so high that it may not recover public confidence in its current configuration. The capacity of GECOM to serve as a neutral and effective overseer of the procedural aspects of the system was called into question because of the concerns regarding voter lists, voter registration, diaspora voting, vote-buying, and enforcement of campaign finance laws. Guyanese on both sides of the political aisle believe the integrity of GECOM has been severely compromised. Smaller political parties would like to see a mandated set-aside seat for their representation on the commission.

Executive Branch

The President of Guyana, currently the Honorable Dr. Irfaan Ali, was elected by a closed party list and by winning the largest number of votes. It is very difficult to be elected to parliament and not possible to be elected as President without being a member of a political party. The President holds office for a term of five years and serves as Head of State, the Supreme Executive Authority, and the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces. The President also appoints members to constitutional commissions, senior judicial officers, he can veto legislation and enjoys full immunity in the execution of his duties as President.

Political power is highly concentrated in the executive branch of the government through the Office of the President and the appointed Prime Minister. The Executive Presidency model was adopted in 1980 and the President exercises executive authority and control of the government through the cabinet of ministers. The constitution mandates a high degree of cabinet involvement in executive decision-making while the National Assembly serves as a check on the executive branch. This type of Westminster system does not encourage participatory processes and reaching consensus with the opposition and other key pressure groups on public policy priorities. Consequentially, the executive branch of government is both protected and isolated from outside influence because there is no real system of outside accountability. The opposition in parliament exercises watchdog functions on public spending through the Public Accounts Committee (see next section).

The two recent close election returns may be a harbinger for changes that bring more transparency to decision-making in the executive branch. Externally, the president is messaging his government's commitment to increased predictability, political stability, and security. Domestically, President Ali and his 19-member cabinet are espousing a fresh approach to governing through new ideas, competency, and experience. The government has embarked on a series of public discussions throughout the country, although mostly in PPP/C strongholds, to deliver messages of unity, reform, inclusion, and equitable access to social services.

Legislative Branch

The legislative power of Guyana resides in parliament, which according to the Constitution shall consist of the President and the National Assembly. The unicameral National Assembly is comprised of 65 members/representatives, of which 40 are elected based on proportional representation and 25 from geographical constituencies. The electoral system is best described as a hybrid system that utilizes some aspects of proportional representation and first past the post, which is unique in the region. It uses a closed list system to determine how seats won are occupied and the Hare Quota largest remainder formula to translate the votes cast into seats won by each political party.

There are no regulations that specify how parties identify and select candidates from the party list to become members of the Assembly. Further, because there is no requirement that the regional representatives must reside in the regions, equitable geographical representation is not guaranteed or often realized. The complete party control over the selection of members and their legislative agenda

means there is no accountability driven by voters, only to party leaders. Cabinet ministers are also members of the Assembly and predictably support the government position. Since the executive and the National Assembly are both typically controlled by the same party, the National Assembly cannot provide impartial oversight of the executive branch. However, there are several committees of the national assembly that have some responsibility for account and auditing. The PAC, one such committee, has responsibility for examination of audited accounts of the Auditor General's report, nominating the members of the Public Procurement Commission, and ensures compliance by the ministries and divisions of government with financial regulations to maintain transparency and accountability. The committee which in essence is a watchdog of public spending is headed by a member of the main opposition in the national assembly. On June 22, 2021, the then head of the committee, David Patterson was removed after a vote of non-confidence in the national assembly. He was replaced on June 30, 2021 by Opposition Member, Jermaine Figueria.

Judicial Branch

There is limited confidence in the independence of the judiciary. Many Guyanese see the adjudication of justice as a product of one's social and economic standing, political affiliation or alignments rather than based on the rule of law. In theory the judiciary is a co-equal branch of government with the legislature and executive. Arguably, in practice, the system of making temporary appointments of key officials in the judiciary in lieu of permanent appointments renders it susceptible to politicization and undue influence from the executive and legislature. The judicial system continues to be an important aspect of governance in Guyana, especially following the March 2020 national elections, which resulted in many court cases contesting the outcome of the election.

The stalemate over reforms to the judicial system, has created an ad hoc approach to quality appointments of the chancellor and chief justice and efforts to undo decades of court packing. In fact, Guyana has only filled the two most senior judicial appointments in an acting capacity since the amendment to the constitution in 2001.

Civil Service

The public sector is large, inefficient, lacks adequate investment capital, institutional, infrastructure and human capacity and therefore fails to supply adequate public services. The public sector provides administrative services to the entire country through a complex and unwieldy architecture of institutions that includes ministries of government, constitutional agencies, security forces, public and financial corporations, autonomous and semi-autonomous bodies, and regional administration. These services include public health, education, human and social security, postal, telecommunications, agricultural and mining services, registrations of businesses, births and deaths, immigration and legal among other services.

Insufficient coordination between the institutions that manage the public services is a serious problem. The legal framework guiding this sector needs a focus on human resource management. There should be a functioning Public Service Commission (PSC) that is a constitutionally mandated authority to appoint, transfer, discipline, and remove public officers. The PSC, however, is not staffed so there is no capacity to fulfill their responsibilities for appointments, transfers, and discipline to permanent secretaries or other heads of department. The Commission has an obligation to review the exercise of such delegated authority upon the request of the public officer. There is also a Department of Public Service (formerly the Public Service Ministry), which is an autonomous agency within the PSC that is responsible for administration for the entire Public Service.

Civil Society

Guyanese civil society popularly consists of many types of CSOs: formal non-governmental organizations, informal community-based organizations, labor organizations, human rights associations, religious organizations and networks, ethnic representative organizations, women's and vulnerable groups, legal fraternities and societies, youth organizations and networks, and others. During key informant interviews, many respondents said the lack of specific legislation regulating not-for-profit organizations hindered members' ability to associate. Without specific authorizing legislation, civil society bodies are forced to register under the Company Act, which does not easily facilitate the operations of CSOs. Alternatively, some organizations are registered under the outdated Friendly Societies Act, which doesn't cater to a new and more dynamic organizational approach to civil society work. Due to this murky legal environment, the true number of CSOs in the country is unknown as there is no single governmental entity responsible for their monitoring.

Media

Guyana has private and public media outlets operating on traditional media formats and a number of independent media available on social media platforms. Each of the media outlets provide different types of information to different political actors in different ways. The government-owned national newspaper, *Guyana Chronicle*, and national television station, *National Communications Network (NCN)*, have national coverage. Two national newspapers, *Kaieteur News* and *Stabroek News* are owned privately. Government-controlled radio monopolies ended in 2012 with the granting of private radio licenses. In 2016, further licenses were granted to private radio broadcasters by the then APNU+AFC government. Accusations of political favoritism followed both the 2012 and 2016 granting of licenses. The two non-state national newspapers are generally viewed as being impartial, however, because of its coverage of governance issues related to the nascent oil and gas industry, *Kaieteur News* is seen as anti-foreign investment and, at times, anti-government.

The media coverage of the 2020 elections and the delayed announcement of the results occurred in the unprecedented times of a global pandemic. However, the media landscape did not rise to a challenge for improved media products. Media in Guyana continues to be politicized and pluralistic with media entities being accused of political biases from all stakeholders including the political parties. There is continued lack of oversight of the media by the regulatory body and this negatively impacts the information disseminated on governance. State media, despite promises of reform from both major parties, continues to be the mouthpiece of the party in government rather than operating in the public interest.

Marginalized Populations-Indigenous Populations

The current indigenous population in Guyana constitutes 10.5 percent (82,913 people) of the overall population of 789,647, based on the Worldometer calculations of the latest United Nations population data. More than 90 percent of the indigenous population reside in about 160 communities in the "hinterland" regions. Indigenous communities grapple with inferior public services including education and health and access to public goods and services due to their geographical location. Local governance structures of indigenous communities, regional organs, and their village councils lack the managerial and technical capacity, including policy knowledge, to implement national policies in indigenous communities due to a lack of coordination among the national and local officials.³⁴ The national agency with responsibility for Indigenous People's affairs is the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs. Since a 2018 review of the Amerindian Act – legislation guiding indigenous governance – the Ministry is still to address the

³⁴ UNICEF 2017, Study on Indigenous Women and Children in Guyana

inadequacies identified in the review process, which had been coordinated and led by indigenous organizations and representatives.

Security Services

Guyana's security sector consists of several bodies collectively called the Joint Services. The Joint Services come under the responsibility of the Ministry of Home Affairs, previously called (from 2015-2020) the Ministry of Public Security. Joint Services consists of the Guyana Defense Force, Guyana Police Force, Guyana Prison Service, and Guyana Fire Service. The head of the Joint Services is the President. Public security and immigration are under the remit of the Ministry, despite the change in government in 2020. During the period 2016 - 2020 public security emerged as a higher concern for citizens and the authorities.

Guyana Police Force

Perception of the Guyana Police Force is evenly split with half of the interviewed respondents viewing the police favorably while the other half expressing negative views. The negative perceptions of the force were shared equally between persons residing on the coast and persons in hinterland locations. Police abuses and excesses have been alleged by young urban Afro-Guyanese males, indigenous persons, and migrants from Venezuela. During the year 2020 several policemen in various hinterland locations were accused of rape.³⁵ At the time of this assessment, some senior police officers, including an Assistant Police Commissioner have been charged with fraud.³⁶ The Office of Professional Responsibility of the Force is responsible for the investigations of complaints against police. In 2017, the Office received 644 cases of complaints, a five percent increase over 2016. Thirty-one police officers were dismissed after investigations of their complaints were completed.

In addition, the force is presently the victim of a protracted battle between the government and the Police Service Commission. The Police Service Commission's function is to confirm appointments and promotions of police officers. The five-member commission was suspended in 2021 by the President. The Commission was also the focus of a lawsuit brought by senior police officers who sought the court's decision on the legality of the Police Service Commission policy of use of disciplinary action as a criterion for promotion.

Guyana Defense Force

The Guyana Defense Force (GDF) continues to be held in high regard by all stakeholders in Guyana. This was reinforced by their non-involvement in the aftermath of the 2020 elections. Respondents interviewed for this assessment remarked that they have minimal interaction with the GDF, which they consider a good thing. They do recognize the increasing importance of the work of the force in protecting the borders of the country and the national security especially considering the recent oil discoveries. As part of efforts to increase the capacity of the GDF, parliament approved a partial advance payment of approximately 2 million United States Dollars on a Bell 412 helicopter. This along with other approved expenditures will improve the capacity of the force to conduct aerial operations.

³⁵ <https://www.stabroeknews.com/2020/08/08/news/guyana/cops-accused-of-raping-woman-at-lethem/>
<https://newsroom.gy/2021/02/16/cop-under-close-arrest-for-allegedly-raping-woman-at-moruca/>

³⁶ <https://guyanachronicle.com/2021/04/17/more-fraud-charges-for-senior-police-officers/>
<https://newsroom.gy/2021/03/26/assistant-police-commissioner-three-others-charged-with-fraud/>

Public Integrity Institutions

Ethnic Relations Commission. The commission aims to promote ethnic harmony and security in Guyana. One of its many functions is the establishment of “mechanisms and procedures for arbitration, conciliation, mediation and similar forms of dispute resolution that would ensure ethnic harmony and peace.” In the latter part of 2020 and early months of 2021, editorials and opinions expressed on social media have questioned the effectiveness of the Commission and its ability to carry out its functions. The present Commission has engaged in some public education and outreach activities to encourage a national conversation on race. There are mixed reviews on the effectiveness of the Commission due to its limited capacity to reach consensus within the committee membership. During the 2020 elections, the Commission launched a media monitoring platform to discourage new media from fanning the flames of racism in Guyana. As a result, journalists and politicians were brought before the Commission for publishing inflammatory public statements on Facebook, in particular³⁷³⁸. A member of the Commission also was accused of making racist statements. Despite sections of the society demanding his resignation, he remains a member of the ERC.

Women and Gender Equality Commission (WGEC). The WGEC has a constitutional mandate to support “gender issues, promote the advancement of women in society and investigate and make recommendations to the parliament.”³⁹ The Commission has not been successful in convincing the National Assembly to adopt its recommendations. Other barriers to its proper functioning include financial resources for programs and public education and awareness.

Integrity Commission. The Commission has had mixed success in its endeavor to get public officials to declare assets. As recently as 2020, 25 Members of the National Assembly and 52 Officials failed to declare their assets for the period July 2018 to June 2019 and were threatened with court action by the Commission. Established by the Integrity Commission Act of 1997, the Commission's purpose is to improve governance by securing the Integrity of Persons in Public Life. The Commission also receives, retains, and examines declarations of assets, liabilities and income from specified persons in public life.

International Actors

The set of international actors relevant to Guyana includes not just members of the international community active inside the country, but also those active in the region and elsewhere.

United States. US policy views Guyana as a strong partner in the Caribbean region, especially through the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative to enhance the security and prosperity of the region. As the nearest significant donor partner, the US works closely with Guyana to combat drug trafficking and other transnational crimes that threaten regional security. Guyana is a transit country for cocaine destined for the US and Canada and US assistance aims to strengthen the integrity and capacity of Guyana's criminal justice system as well as democracy and transparency programming, including support of Guyana's membership in the EITI to promote accountability in extractive sector governance. The US is one of Guyana's most significant trading partners and home to an estimated 200,000 Guyanese diaspora, the majority of whom live in New York City.

Caribbean Community. The CARICOM secretariat is in Guyana, which represents 20 countries. CARICOM rests on four main pillars of regional cooperation: economic integration, foreign policy coordination, human and social development, and security. US Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken met virtually with

³⁷ <https://www.kaieteurnews.com/2020/06/18/erc-meets-with-guyanese-critic-on-racial-statements/>

³⁸ <https://villagevoicenews.com/2020/08/19/14-wanted-by-erc-for-alleged-racially-insensitive-comments/>

³⁹ <https://wgec.gov.gy/about.php>

the foreign ministers from the CARICOM member states on April 21, 2021 to advance bilateral and regional interests, specially focused on plans to manage the COVID-19 pandemic and to promote a regional recovery, cooperation on increasing climate resilience, and continued collaborations on strengthening security, democratic values, and human rights.

Inter-American Development Bank. The Country Representative for the IDB has been in Guyana for nine years and has worked closely with the GOG in building the capacity of the public sector to become more efficient and strengthen governing systems. The targeted areas of investment are infrastructure, hospitality, and agriculture. The IDB advises the GOG to prioritize public procurement reforms and operationalizing the oversight of the country's sovereign wealth fund. The other pressing need is to develop a public investment planning body that will link strategic policy goals to public spending.

World Bank. The current World Bank project portfolio in Guyana amounts to \$61 million across five projects in the areas of education, energy and extractives, flood risk management, and the financial sector. These projects contribute to Guyana's efforts to enhance resilience to natural disasters, improve the quality of education and skills, and support private sector development initiatives, particularly by focusing on improving the business environment and financial sector development, all identified as priorities through broad-based consultations.

United Nations. The U.N. has 23 entities operating in Guyana, the largest is the UNDP, which convenes the donor coordination working group. The largest funded U.N. activities focus on health, humanitarian assistance to vulnerable populations, resilience building and agricultural support. The U.N. agencies led a multi-donor task force to address the expanding problem of gender-based violence through a public education campaign and engaging government counterparts.

Canada. Most regional aid to the Caribbean and to Guyana is funded through Canada's contributions to the IBRD Trust Fund for the Caribbean Resilience Facility and the IMF Regional Technical Assistance Center. Bilateral aid to Guyana targets climate resilience activities and supporting vulnerable populations, including people with disabilities, gender, youth, LGBTQI and institutions that support indigenous populations. The Local Initiatives Fund provides grants to CSOs working at the subnational level that support inclusive governance, gender equality and empowerment of women and girls, health, education, nutrition, and climate action.

United Kingdom. UKAid to the region and Guyana is primarily focused on helping the Caribbean prepare for and reduce the risk from climate change and disasters. Targeted aid to Guyana helps vulnerable people to be better prepared and equipped to withstand these climate and disaster threats through training and institutional capacity building. Other aid assistance goes to retrofitting hospitals in the regions outside of Georgetown and rural development projects that benefit indigenous peoples.

European Union. The EU delegation concentrates on a few development issues, including climate change and forest protection, judicial reforms, and governance on a very broad scale. It also supported the EU election observer delegation and drafted 26 recommendations for improving electoral procedures; the findings were shared in a series of roundtable discussions.

China. China's diplomatic and economic relationships with Guyana dates to 1972 when Guyana's Prime Minister recognized China and the economic ties have only strengthened over the past two decades. China's 'development policy' implementation is directed by the perceived needs of the Guyanese political establishment so there is little to no oversight or sustainability in its work. If the Government of Guyana

chooses to adhere to its *Green State Development Strategy: Vision 2040 Diversified, Resilient, Low-carbon, People-centered*⁴⁰, China's infrastructure projects could be slowed down.

International Non-State Actors

Guyana Diaspora. Another important factor in this analysis is the role of the estimated 500,000, Guyana first-generation immigrants worldwide.⁴¹ The International Organization for Migration (IOM) states that the skilled and qualified diaspora can be found in the United Kingdom, North America, Barbados, Antigua, and Trinidad and Tobago.⁴² The United States Immigration and Naturalization Service reported an estimated 250,000 regular migrants to the US. Other estimates peg the Guyanese diaspora in the US at 400,000 (both regular and irregular migrants). The Guyanese diaspora are generally well educated and technically skilled; they could become an important asset if incentives are offered to encourage the return of professionals either temporarily or longer-term. About half of the working-age Guyanese migrants in the US work in professional, managerial, or sales occupations while other occupations include service, construction, and agriculture industries⁴³. The oil and non-oil economic sectors are facing a chronic shortage of skilled labor in technical, agriculture, financial services, tourism, health services, and hospitality services that can be filled by members of the diaspora. International investors and skilled workers in the oil sector, for example are already generating demand for reliable power sources, better infrastructure and airports, access to high-speed internet and telecommunications, high quality hotel accommodations, safety inspected foods served at modern restaurants, transportation, access to internationally linked financial institutions, and adequately staffed and resourced health care facilities.

Despite living in other places Guyanese stay connected to governance issues in their homeland through friends, families, and monitoring of the local and international media. Some Guyanese have returned to Guyana and are actively involved in the political parties.⁴⁴ The University of Guyana sought through a diaspora project to engage Guyanese academics in higher education and business opportunities in Guyana.⁴⁵ The IOM's Effective and Sustainable Diaspora Engagement for Development in the Caribbean also made efforts to induce the diaspora in private investment in the country. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has a diaspora unit, but its activities have been limited though it does recognize that the diaspora can play a meaningful role in the development activities of the country. The ministry has collaborated with the Center for Strategic International Studies in its development of a Guyana mapping project that is partially funded by Exxon Mobil.⁴⁶

Organized Crime. Transnational organized crime networks are expanding and diversifying their activities, resulting in the convergence of risks and threats that are increasingly complex and destabilizing, according to the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, which reported a staggering increase in homicide rates in the region that increased by an average of nearly 150 percent from 2000 to 2018.⁴⁷ The trafficking of illicit drugs and illegal guns is still the primary activity of transnational organized crime in the region. Levels of insecurity are rising along with increases in unemployment and income inequality and low levels of economic growth.

⁴⁰ <https://www.doe.gov.gy/published/document/5cd1d69fe5569929a69b35b0>

⁴¹ Center for Strategic and International Studies 2020, The Guyanese Diaspora

⁴² <https://www.iom.int/news/iom-and-guyana-launch-diaspora-engagement-project>

⁴³ Center for Strategic and International Studies 2020, The Guyanese Diaspora

⁴⁴ <https://guyanatimesgy.com/submit-proof-of-relinquished-foreign-citizenship-parliament-clerk-to-mps/>

⁴⁵ <https://guyanatimesgy.com/ugs-diaspora-conference-set-for-may-2020/>

⁴⁶ <https://www.csis.org/analysis/guyanese-diaspora>

⁴⁷ U.N. Office on Drugs and Crime dashboard, accessed on May 5, 2021.

USAID'S OPERATIONAL/PROGRAMMATIC ENVIRONMENT USG AND USAID PRIORITIES, INTERESTS AND RESOURCES

The most promising entry point for DRG programming relates to leveraging the power and prestige of the United States to encourage a new dialogue around a new national development strategy. A similar activity was undertaken by the Carter Center in 1997, which brought together the nation's leadership across the broad spectrum of political actors and institutions. The initiative created champions and entry points for change. Many of the same recommendations made more than 20 years ago remain presciently relevant, especially the need for investment in human resources, strengthening weak institutions, and building the nation's infrastructure that connects people, policies, and public services.

USAID's comparative advantage in promoting the DRG elements analyzed in this assessment is related to its long history of working in Guyana, although there were complaints that USAID Mission's reduced presence in Guyana came at an inopportune period of bilateral relations. The goal of the USAID/ESC 2021-2025 RDCS is to promote a safe, prosperous and resilient Caribbean region that supports its vulnerable populations, withstands external shocks, and promotes accountable institutions, economic development, and private sector led growth. In this new strategy, USAID will work to strengthen citizen security; financing of self-reliance, and resilience within national institutions, national systems and among communities and citizens. The USAID and broader USG objectives to strengthen citizen security have been well received by Guyanese as well as efforts through the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative to enhance the security of the region.

Most stakeholders acknowledged in interviews that the international community and the USG have an important role in guiding and supporting democratic change. Many of the 92 respondents included in the key informant interviews, including political leaders and activists and actors, expressed gratitude for the international community's intervention to break the post-2020 election impasse. They cited the efforts of the US, Canada, Britain, European Union, as well as CARICOM and the Commonwealth, as critical. Many of the Guyanese respondents cautioned that the solutions for Guyana's political and ethnic problems lie with the Guyanese because their political impasse cannot be solved with a "development solution."

USAID activities to promote civil society and private sector engagement, as well as inclusion of gender and indigenous populations can be a catalyst for demanding greater government accountability and transparency. As noted throughout this report, local government development and empowerment of local officials is key to good governance. The systemic weaknesses in public finance and administration and inequitable access to economic opportunities perpetuates the lack of competition and government accountability. Strengthening systems that promote social and economic resilience (e.g. juvenile justice and education) is critical to reducing economic barriers that disenfranchise large segments of the population that extend beyond ethnic divisions.

Several donors and Guyanese CSO stakeholders commended USAID's programming in the areas of citizen security and more specifically, the prevention and recovery from crime and violence by at-risk youth. As noted in the analysis section related to rule of law and human rights, there are increases in child victims of sex-trafficking and forced labor in the fast-growing extractive and service industries. Therefore, strengthening resiliency at the community level and applying proven intervention methodologies are important as is engaging private sector entities to ensure youth are mentored and more readily absorbed into meaningful employment. USAID Interventions will help equip communities to reduce vulnerabilities through building opportunities for active citizen engagement in local governance and community development whilst also improving their disaster management capacity.

Guyana's importance to American foreign policy has changed due to the massive oil reserves but the current government has not yet adjusted to this paradigm shift in the relationship. In key informant interviews, senior government officials acknowledged that the relationship has undergone a fundamental change and focus given the engagement of US oil companies in the extraction and shipping of the oil and gas products. The Assessment Team heard from multiple respondents about the critical need for a national development strategy, but did not uncover any evidence that there is a whole of government approach to doing so. Few members of the Guyana Government as well as civil society actors in the country articulated the ramifications of American multinational corporations' huge investments. Executive leadership from ExxonMobil and Hess can call and meet with the US Secretary of State and National Security Council to express their concerns about the political, social and economic policy environment in Guyana.

US Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken met virtually with the foreign ministers from the CARICOM member states in April 2021 to advance bilateral and regional interests, focused on plans to manage the pandemic and to promote a regional recovery, cooperation on increasing climate resilience, and continued collaborations on strengthening security, democratic values, and human rights. Working together through the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative, the US and Guyana, along with other nations of the Caribbean, are combating drug trafficking and other transnational crimes that threaten regional security. In addition, a project funded by the Initiative helps reduce youth violence by engaging at-risk youth in job and civic opportunities. The US works closely with Guyana in the fight against HIV/AIDS through the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief program. US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and USAID administered a multimillion-dollar program of education, prevention, and treatment for those infected and affected by HIV/AIDS, contributing to the country's healthcare capacity.

In Guyana, past USAID programs have focused on health, economic growth, and democracy and governance. The health program strengthened public health systems and worked to ensure the availability of comprehensive care; enhanced civil-society and private-sector responses to HIV/AIDS; provided HIV prevention services; and improved supply-chain management of drugs and other supplies. Economic growth activities strengthened the capacity of Guyana's private sector and supported increased investments in non-traditional exports within four sectors: wood products, aquaculture, agribusiness, and ecotourism. USAID support has also improved institutions and systems in the areas of rule of law, good governance, political competition and consensus building, and civil society.

The Public Affairs Section of the US Department of State develops people-to-people ties through exchange programs such as the Youth Ambassadors program, the Young Leaders of the Americas Initiative, the Global Entrepreneurship Summit, and the 100,000 Strong in the Americas Innovation Fund. The Public Affairs Section supports, and by supporting meaningful discourse with civil society, the private sector, and government on issues of bilateral importance through cultural, educational, sports, and music programs. US military medical and engineering teams continue to conduct training exercises in Guyana, digging wells, building schools and clinics, and providing medical treatment. The US Department of the Treasury's Department's Office of Technical Assistance provides support to the Guyana Revenue Authority to strengthen auditing capacity.

The US continues to be one of Guyana's most significant trading partners. According to the Guyana Bureau of Statistics, the US market remained significant for Guyana with export earnings of \$779 million at the end of 2020, contributing to 30 percent of Guyana's exports. Guyana's imports from the US amounted to \$811.5 million at the end of 2020, or 39.3 percent of Guyana's imports. Guyana's major exports to the US in 2020 continued to be non-monetary gold, fish and shellfish, bauxite, lumber and wood, and apparel and household goods. The major imports from the US in 2020 were articles of iron and steel, motor cars, machinery, foodstuffs, animal feeds, petroleum products, chemicals, computers and computer accessories, passenger vehicles, telecommunication equipment, and pharmaceuticals.

The Environment for DRG Programming

USAID's programs in Guyana are managed out of USAID's Eastern and Southern Caribbean Mission, which has a small presence in Georgetown, Guyana. The total amount of USAID regional and bilateral funding to Guyana is about \$6.5 million in FY21, of which \$1.5 million supports the country's current Covid-19 pandemic response. It is critical that USAID works with partners to support government as well as civil society accountability and transparency measures that must be operationalized very quickly to oversee the anticipated flow of funds to the government treasury.

It is not clear at all how the Government of Guyana will build institutional capacity and a skilled labor force to manage its new wealth. Many of the public sector governance functions such as public procurement for government services, auditing and oversight of government revenue and spending, establishing business enabling environments, etc., will need to be outsourced while human capital development is advanced. The foreign assistance budgets of the United Kingdom, Canada, EU, and UNDP are quite small and similar in size to that of USAID. There is little overlap in donor programming, which focuses primarily on supporting vulnerable populations, especially indigenous peoples; improving education, strengthening health care and hospitals; digitizing records and court administration, and building resilience to climate change.

There is a lot of room for uncertainty as Guyana stands at the threshold of a new era, but at the same time with a projected \$10 billion annual revenue flow, there is a large margin for error at this early stage.

New donor strategies are targeting support to vulnerable populations, especially indigenous populations, improvements to health care services and small-scale environmental awareness and advocacy investments. None of the donor respondents shared any new initiatives or changes to their current portfolio of projects. The donors did not express optimism that electoral reforms would gain traction but emphasized the need for building consensus around supporting a national strategy and planning framework.

Most of Canada's regional aid to the Caribbean and to Guyana is funded through Canada's contributions to the IBRD Trust Fund for the Caribbean Resilience Facility and the IMF Regional Technical Assistance Center. Bilateral aid to Guyana targets climate resilience activities and supporting vulnerable populations, including people with disabilities, gender, youth, LGBTQI and institutions that support indigenous populations. The Local Initiatives Fund provides grants to CSOs working at the subnational level that support inclusive governance, gender equality and empowerment of women and girls, health, education, nutrition, and climate action.

Like Canada, aid from the United Kingdom to the region and Guyana is primarily focused on helping the Caribbean prepare for and reduce the risk from climate change and disasters. Targeted aid to Guyana helps vulnerable people to be better prepared and equipped to withstand these climate and disaster threats through training and institutional capacity building. Other aid assistance goes to retrofitting hospitals in the regions outside of Georgetown and rural development projects that benefit indigenous peoples.

Donors meet regularly through the UNDP's coordinated donor forum. The UN has 23 entities operating in Guyana, the largest is the UNDP, which convenes the donor coordination working group. The largest funded UN activities focus on health, humanitarian assistance to vulnerable populations, resilience building and agricultural support. The UN agencies led a multi-donor task force to address the expanding problem of gender-based violence through a public education campaign and engaging government counterparts.

The EU delegation concentrates on a few development issues, including climate change and forest protection, judicial reforms, and governance on a very broad scale. It also supported the EU election observer delegation and drafted 26 recommendations for improving electoral procedures; the findings were shared in a series of roundtable discussions.

A second potential area for DRG programming is to work closely with the international financial institutions and the GOG in building the capacity of the public sector to become more efficient and strengthen governing systems. The IDB and World Bank have much more robust programming in the areas of public sector reforms, with the largest donor portfolio of more than \$260 and \$61 million, respectively, to support efforts for economic diversification and modern industrial and labor policies. The priorities within the “Green State Development Strategy” are strengthening fiscal policies, facilitating private sector development to support the delivery of better services, and delivering critical infrastructure. The targeted areas of investment are infrastructure, hospitality, and agriculture. The IDB advises the GOG to prioritize public procurement reforms and operationalizing the oversight of the country’s sovereign wealth fund. The other pressing need is to develop a public investment planning body that will link strategic policy goals to public spending.

The current World Bank project portfolio has five projects in the areas of education, energy and extractives, flood risk management, and the financial sector. These projects contribute to Guyana’s efforts to enhance resilience to natural disasters, improve the quality of education and skills, and support private sector development initiatives, particularly by focusing on improving the business environment and financial sector development, all identified as priorities through broad-based consultations.

CARICOM, as noted earlier, played a major role in helping to end the political crisis in Guyana through diplomatic work, by sending election observers, and mediating amongst the various political actors who have competing agendas. The headquarters of the secretariat is in Guyana, which represents 20 countries. CARICOM rests on four main pillars of regional cooperation: economic integration, foreign policy coordination, human and social development, and security. US Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken met virtually with the foreign ministers from the CARICOM member states in April 2021, to support the strengthening of CARICOM’s role as a strong multilateral organization to address security and stability issues. CARICOM is also unencumbered by not having a colonial past in Guyana unlike other bilateral donors such as the United Kingdom and other European countries.

Figure 4: USAID ASSISTANCE TO GUYANA FISCAL YEAR 2021

Extractive Industry (EITI)	Regional Caribbean Basin Security Initiative - \$9 million	Expenditure Procedures Package 3 years - \$4.5 million	Local Works Funding	USAID Total (\$USD)
\$1 million	\$1 million (est.)	\$1.5 million (est.)	\$3 million	\$6.5 million

Figures provided to the DRG Assessment Team by USAID/ESC Mission in April 2021

RECOMMENDATIONS

OUTLINING THE PROPOSED STRATEGY

Summary Analysis and Theory of Change

The analysis from Steps 1 and 2 identified challenges to accountability and governance that affect inclusion in and consensus on the future state of Guyana. Foremost is weak political accountability, which influences all the other DRG elements, as well as an underlying lack of consensus and inclusive development goals. The accountability gap can be seen in myriad national-level institutions, regions, and even in political parties and CSOs. Public perception of the impunity of governing elites stems in large part from this gap and is arguably driving citizen attitudes and behavior in directions that are less supportive of a multi-ethnic and open polity in Guyana. At the same time, a distinct but related governance gap directly affects the lives of citizens in negative ways and reinforces perceptions of elite disconnect. Poor government performance, lack of responsiveness and inclusion, and opaque policymaking processes occur at all levels.

Based on the Step 3 filter of USG and USAID priorities, interests and resources, the team crafted a preliminary problem statement below on the DRG challenges facing Guyana:

Institutionalized concentration of power among ethnically identified elites who control political parties, and through them government institutions, prevents government from serving the interests of all citizens, while dominating political and economic development. The lack of political competition and accountability leads to ethnic tensions and systematic exclusion across all levels of government and the private sector when Guyana is about to experience transformational economic growth from newly discovered oil and gas resources.

After completing key informant interviews with more than 92 respondents, the team revised its problem statement to capture a more nuanced understanding of accountability issues. This amended statement recognizes that political competition exists in Guyana but there are few, if any, incentives for the ruling party or opposition party to compromise and cooperate with each other or other stakeholders. The two major parties want to perpetuate the winner-take-all political system because it benefits themselves when their party is in power.

Institutionalized concentration of power held by ethnically identified elites perpetuates political polarization and reduces incentives for compromise and cooperation with other stakeholders. Limited competition and political accountability exacerbate the lack of consensus about the future direction of the country at a time when Guyana is about to experience transformational economic growth.

The team formulated a purpose statement to guide USAID's objectives for future DRG programming:

To develop a modern democratic state that serves the needs of all citizens, Guyana will need to (a) develop a national development strategy and corresponding budget; (b) strengthen accountability institutions (c) legislate and operationalize the oversight and management of the sovereign wealth fund; (d) improve the performance and reliability of municipal government in tandem with more effective coordination across ministries; and (e) engage citizens, CSOs and media in pursuing accountability and connectivity of governance in all regions.

These broad programming areas align with the Administration's foreign policy priorities. Closing accountability gaps by strengthening national and local institutions, prioritizing a national development strategy and corresponding budget, increasing the effectiveness of public integrity institutions, and building the capacity of civil society and other non-state actors to demand good governance will ensure Guyana's unprecedented wealth is shared equitably. Agreeing to "what is Guyana and who does it serve" is a fundamental step in achieving consensus and inclusive governance.

It should be emphasized that the team does not expect a quick resolution to the political standoff between the main political parties which would lead to consensus for changing the country's proportional electoral system. If lawmakers remain accountable to party leaders and not to their constituents, this disagreement seems intractable for the time being. The team's analysis recognizes the severity of this obstacle to democratic governance and offers its recommendations within this context.

The Assessment Team offers three overarching findings as USAID implements its new strategy for the RDCA and bilateral aid to Guyana. These high-level findings are built on three key assumptions. First, it is assumed that Guyana's citizens increasingly will demand agency in creating national development strategy and budget. Second, it is assumed that the international community, CARICOM, and the US will continue to play a positive role in the Caribbean region, including engaging with Guyana as a regional partner in promoting stability and security. Finally, it is assumed that citizens will not escalate inter-ethnic and racial tensions and take coordinated violent actions that threaten the security of the nation.

Prepare for a massive influx of government revenue with little expertise on how to handle it. Guyana will face an array of governance and institutional challenges as it tries to manage an expected annual revenue of about \$9.5 - 10 billion. Guyana's governance scores are in the bottom half of global rankings, especially in transparency and regulatory procedures. The limited and ineffectual government accountability mechanisms can undermine citizen's confidence in public institutions and further erode consensus in a vision for the country's future. Improving the effectiveness of the country's public integrity institutions is critical to inclusive, sustainable development.

Address the critical need for a National Development Strategy that Accelerates Democratization of Public Institutions and Spending. The government and opposition parties can find common ground in public spending on health, education, job creation and climate change risks. In 1997, the Carter Center facilitated a national dialogue to set out priorities for Guyana's economic and social development policies for the next decade. The strategy was formulated through an unusually participatory effort involving experts from both the public and private sectors, and in its very conception was made for subsequent reviews of the draft by the wider public, which ensured public confidence in the equitability of the plan. Guyana must invest in building the capacity of its current and future workforce in the oil and gas sector as well as other sectors like infrastructure, hospitality, and agriculture. The oil wealth will exacerbate the deep disparities between regions and ethnic groups so social protection and cash transfers will become important for the country's poorest and most vulnerable. The country can afford to provide the most basic social services to every citizen of the country.

Assume the political stranglehold of the two political parties is cracking. Despite the static party system and prolonged dispute of the 2020 election outcome, Guyana has had peaceful transitions of power in 2015 and 2020. On a slim margin, David Granger, an Afro-Guyanese, came to power with a new coalition that replaced 18 years of governments headed by Indo-Guyanese politicians. This opportunity for change, however, was squandered by relitigating old grievances rather than bringing in a new young cadre of leadership. The 2020 election, prolonged though it was, represents another crack in the old party system. There is a dynamism and decided shift in the current government, which has brought in new ministers that view problem solving through different lenses. The political impulses from the past will not

be able to handle massive oil production and revenues. Indigenous voters and small parties may become key to the formation of governing coalitions, which would change the nature of policy and the political calculus of reform. Previous generations of Guyanese emigrated because they were not born into the families who control jobs and opportunities. This generation, however, has shown through its activism in the last two elections that they are not tied to the old identity politics of their parents. There is a glimmer of hope that the ethnically- and religiously-based two party system is giving way to a more pluralistic society that sees people as women, youth, indigenous and LGBTQI—and not just as ethnic blocks of voters. These voters want to elect people who can get something done.

Strategic and Illustrative Program Recommendations

To manage the expected resource windfall, Guyana needs to improve the quality and capacity of public and private institutions; make revenue collection and management more efficient and transparent; and adopt sound accountability and oversight mechanisms. As the government begins to develop the oil and gas sector, ensuring governance mechanisms that adhere to international environmental and social standards is critical to avoid many of the issues resource-rich countries have faced. The need for better governance to manage long standing development constraints is acknowledged by leaders of both political parties, which is an important entry point.

USAID's comparative advantage in promoting the DRG elements analyzed in this assessment is related to its long history of working in Guyana. The goal of USAID/ESC's 2021-2025 RDCS is to promote a safe, prosperous and resilient Caribbean region that supports its vulnerable populations, withstands external shocks, and promotes accountable institutions, economic development, and private sector led growth. In this new strategy, USAID will work to strengthen citizen security; and financing of self-reliance, and resilience within national institutions and systems and among communities and citizens. This current programming may provide opportunities for USAID to work closely with the international financial institutions and the GOG in building the capacity of the public sector to become more efficient and strengthen governing systems.

The following recommendations and illustrative activities are presented in order of priority and feasibility. Given the budget constraints of USAID/ESC, these recommendations are largely focused on leveraging USAID technical expertise to bring value added to ongoing DRG programming and to identify entry points for USAID to launch and support new initiatives.

Support the Government of Guyana in drafting and building consensus around a National Development Strategy and National Development Budget.

The United States could leverage its diplomatic power to jumpstart a dialogue on a national development strategy and national development policy. There is a precedent for USAID to support this type of initiative either directly or through partners like the Carter Center, as it did in the 1990s. The aim of this initiative is to launch a consensus-based process that would be beneficial to the Government of Guyana, civil society and the private sector to bring about policy change without further political polarization. The aim of this National Development Strategy is to weave together macroeconomic and sectoral analyses and proposals into a consistent policy fabric that will bring substantial benefits to all groups in society.

Illustrative activities include:

Assess whether a multi-stakeholder initiative would be appropriate to address the complex challenges in Guyana. Such an initiative would give USAID a platform to help the government implement a collective-action approach to the risks and challenges in Guyana public spending. The fundamental conditions and

development outcomes vary greatly across geographical regions; this complexity requires collaboration among diverse actors, including the government, the private-sector, diaspora, donors, and CSOs. A national strategy debate would serve as a catalyst to push for reforms in public integrity, oversight and accountability by the government and other public servants.

Technical assistance for national-level policy advocacy and dialogue around the development of a national development strategy. Support the government in rolling out a strong public outreach campaign to inform and engage all Guyanese. Help the government set-up public social cohesion outreach, monitoring and feedback mechanisms that engage citizens in the public dialogue. Getting people to talk about their country's future will help accelerate the democratization of institutions.

Leverage the learnings from USAID's flagship programs like Power Africa and USAID's Digital Strategy 2020-2024 to support the new national development's strategy goals of bringing reliable energy sources and internet access to every household in the country. Consider embedding USAID experts in these sectors in key ministries for temporary duty assignments to provide technical support and governance capacity building.

Technical assistance to create a new standalone unit under the executive branch to coordinate/ lead the development and implementation of a national development strategy that draws from USAID's core DRG experience in standing up new governing structures. Coordinate with other donor partners in the region and North America to identify executive leadership training and coaching programs to build management and human resource capacity rapidly, which is currently lacking in most ministries.

Ramp up investments in youth, women and indigenous people's CSOs based in communities to support change-agents.

Illustrative activities include:

Continued technical assistance for national-level policy advocacy and social cohesion that will articulate the demand for political change and better governance. Youth-focused interventions were identified by many stakeholders as critical to building good local citizen advocates and increasing citizen security. Since 2018, USAID's Community Family and Youth Resilience Project has provided life-skills, job readiness and vocational training opportunities for over 500 at-risk Guyanese youth between age 16-29 as part of its workforce development thrust.

Implement the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative to support citizen security, youth development, and juvenile justice programs that target youth (ages 10–29) at-risk for involvement in youth crime and violence. Through a range of interventions, USAID provides pathways for Caribbean youth away from crime and violence and toward productive participation in the community and economy. USAID delivers an integrated program that includes family counseling; connects youth with positive role models; assists youth to develop employability skills; delivers structured sport, recreational, and cultural activities; and builds community resilience.

Technical assistance to CSOs on providing social services for municipal governments. Support would include training to CSOs (formal or informal) at the local level on the public policy cycle, procurement processes, and inspections, with a special focus on persons with disabilities and other marginalized communities. Assistance would also include the sponsorship of policy-oriented associations or forums of service-providing CSOs.

Technical assistance to promote civil society sector growth. Support would go to coordinated efforts by CSO apex organizations to develop strategies and draft legislation for citizen engagement, public awareness campaigns, corporate social responsibility, and funding diversification. Models of legislation, campaigns, and strategies could be adapted from elsewhere in the Caribbean by experienced implementers.

Continue USAID/ESC regional and Guyana-specific interventions designed to enable community participation in the areas of citizen security and the prevention and recovery from crime and violence by at-risk youth. Specifically, USAID/Guyana should guide private sector partners in supporting youth employment.

Customize and replicate best practices learned from USAID/Jamaica's Community Empowerment and Transformation (COMET) Projects I and II related to citizen security programming. COMET II supported USAID/Jamaica's goal of improving resiliency and social cohesion within targeted Jamaican communities. Safety and security were recognized as some of the key challenges to development in Jamaica by successive governments and by Jamaica's development partners, including USAID. The challenges of a stagnant economy constrain development further by limiting budget resources for government spending on safety and security, youth programs, and community development in vulnerable, volatile communities.

Support capacity building programs for CSOs and the social sector generally focusing on bolstering their governance capabilities, with specific emphasis on informing their development programmes employing a social enterprise. This is an imperative given the inadequacies in the current local government system.

Support the development of CSOs that operate as corruption watchdogs such as the National Integrity Action in Jamaica. A particular outcome would be the establishing of integrity champions at the community level which ensure that decisions and resources allocation are meritorious.

Implement programs that support research on pertinent development issues to ensure that the public has access to current data to inform their participation in development decisions. This should be done in partnership with Departments of the University of Guyana and/or any other relevant institutions at the regional and local levels.

Engage USAID's Senior Advisor for Indigenous People's Issues to assess programming opportunities to support the rights and needs of Indigenous Peoples on relevant matters in meetings with government and multilateral institutions. USAID could serve as a facilitator or public-private-partnerships to coordinate assistance strategies and investments in infrastructure.

Target parliamentary and rule of law support to create cultures of innovation within parliamentary committees and constitutionally mandated oversight commissions.

Illustrative activities include:

Technical assistance to assist the parliament to improve its oversight of the executive branch through strengthened committee hearing procedures; assist parliamentary committees in further strengthening their public oversight hearings on executive branch laws, policies, and conduct; and facilitate collaborative work between parliament and the executive by bringing key players from both branches together to plan hearings, identify expert witnesses, and prepare statements of support for holding these hearings.

Training for MPs to encourage constituent outreach, improved communication and engagement through public meetings and requests for input with CSOs, individuals, and the broader public. Support technical capacity building programs and government-to-government exchanges among all donor partners.

Technical assistance to develop and strengthen the constitutionally mandated commissions to increase the professionalism of the members including assistance in drafting a judicial Code of Ethics. Support international professional exchanges to improve the ability of the commission members to be independent bodies. Apply lessons learned from USAID's earlier rule of law programming with the judiciary in Guyana.

Increase civil society strengthening training and technical assistance to improve its ability to draft, review and comment on legislation. Train CSOs to strengthen their awareness of their rights and responsibilities.

Assess options to reconstitute the membership of the public integrity institutions to increase capacity, oversight, and accountability.

Illustrative activities include:

Technical support to strengthen the work of public integrity institutions, which are constitutionally mandated. Support would address issues of legislation, capacity, and enforcement. Public integrity institutions generally do not have authorities for meaningful investigation and litigation, specified requirements for reporting to the Assembly, or substantive independence due to political appointment processes. The Assembly's capacity to engage in better oversight through engagement with public integrity institutions could be addressed through this type of technical support.

Tap into best practices to avoid pitfalls of the "resource curse" and support accountability and anti-corruption principles through adherence to EITI standards and global indexes such as The World Bank's *Ease of Doing Business*. ExxonMobil and Hess are influential members of the EITI and are providing direct support to Guyana to meet international standards, including through the Institute for Strategy and Competitiveness at Harvard Business School.

Technical assistance for training on societal accountability strategies. Support would be used to train journalists on complex topics like procurement, government budgets, corruption, and organized crime, based on models in use elsewhere in the Caribbean. Technical assistance would also be provided to CSOs, journalists, and public integrity institutions on litigation as a tool for enhanced political accountability and rule of law.

Take USAID's Private Sector Engagement expertise and support public-private sector partnerships to help intentionally manage the sovereign wealth fund and advise the private sector on how to govern and manage its country's future investments, including auditing and accounting.

Coordinate with World Bank and IDB efforts to instill greater transparency and accountability across the public sector. Specific measures will be needed to ensure the successful management of the oil sector and the fiscal revenues it generates. The government will need to develop: (i) an adequate policy, regulatory, and contractual framework for the oil sector, (ii) oversight institutions and improved fiscal policy design and administration agencies, and (iii) robust revenue management and distribution processes. While Guyana has made progress in building the capacity to manage its nascent oil sector, further efforts will be needed to reach the levels of regulatory quality and efficiency of other emerging oil producers.

Create incentives and facilities for the involvement of the diaspora in the national development strategy and implementation.

Political parties and the Government of Guyana have made efforts to engage the diaspora to participate in the political process, increase remittances and private investment, and contribute to strengthening higher education. Guyana suffers from a deficit of skilled labor that is likely to grow in the energy sector as well as other sectors; many Guyanese believe the diaspora could play a role in the country's economic transformation.

Launch and support a public-private partnership with the US-based Center for Strategic and International Studies and private sector to assess the feasibility of its recommendations in its October 2020 report, *The Guyana Diaspora*⁴⁸, that lays out a framework for the Guyanese diaspora communities around the world to work collectively and deliberately to establish broad communications, engagement, and collaboration between Guyana and the diaspora through a “Guyana Global” initiative. USAID has developed guidance on how to partner with the diaspora for entrepreneurship and investment, volunteerism and post-disaster response, business networks and market linkages, and mentorship and skills transfer—all these resources could be leveraged in a public-private partnership.

Provide technical support to Guyana to assess how skilled professionals and other resources from the diaspora could be encouraged to return. Engage the diaspora in drafting comprehensive immigration reform and updated labor policies to facilitate their return as well as managing the rising immigration levels.

⁴⁸ The Guyana Diaspora, CSIS. October 2020: https://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/publication/201019_Matera_The_Guyanese_Diaspora.pdf

ANNEX A: KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

I: KEY INFORMANTS BY CATEGORY

National Government	Count	Non-state Actors	Count
Members of Government	4	Political Parties	4
Prime Minister	1	Civil Society	21
Members of Parliament	10	Private Sector	6
Government Commissions	3	Media (Surveys)	10
Regional Democratic Councils	10	Academic	3
Municipalities	4	International Partners	
		USAID	7
		Donor Partners	9
Total			92

2: KEY INFORMANTS LOCATED OUTSIDE THE CAPITOL OF GEORGETOWN

Region 10	Count	Region 6	Count
Regional Democratic Officials	4	Regional Democratic Officials	3
Municipalities	1	Municipalities	3
Member of Parliament	2	Member of Parliament	1
Civil Society	3	Civil Society	6
Private Sectors	1	Private Sectors	1
Telephone Interviews			
Region 7			
Regional Democratic Official	1		
Region 5			
Regional Democratic Official	1		
Region 1	1		
Regional Democratic Official	1		

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ANNEX C: DETAILED DISCUSSION OF ACTORS & INSTITUTIONS

POLITICAL PARTIES AND ELECTORAL INSTITUTIONS

Guyana has a multi-party system in theory but has been a two-party system in practice. There are no explicit barriers to political participation and competition but to be registered in an election, all parties must present a candidate list of sixty-five members, a signature list of 300 registered voters, and have at least thirteen candidates contest in six of the country's ten regional constituencies, which is the most challenging barrier. Smaller parties, which often originate in the Capitol or main urban areas, cannot undertake the economic costs to reach potential supporters in the outlying regions to compete successfully in six constituencies. Smaller parties tend to have a concentrated presence in the Region 4 (location of capitol) and other regions in proximity and primarily focus on issues of grievance. So while parties can form freely and compete in elections, there is a virtual stranglehold on the political landscape by two major ethnically aligned political parties.

Political parties have been organized along ethnic lines since before independence. Indo-Guyanese have supported the PPP/C party since 1950 while Afro-Guyanese have supported the People's National Congress since 1957.

Afro-Guyanese comprise about 30 percent of the population and Indo-Guyanese comprise about 40 percent of the population. The parties heavily engage in identity politics and have promoted a "race first" platform for decades, but due to changing demographics impacted by migration, neither party can gain a clear majority based on race alone. There is also a higher migration of Indo-Guyanese, which is a factor in the competition in recent elections. The closeness of the 2015 and 2020 elections illustrates the diminishing chances of winning without a broad coalition.

The APNU+AFC formed a coalition prior to the 2015 elections and won by a razor thin margin of only 4,506 votes. This was the first coalition slate to win a national election and it brought some hope that the zero-sum nature of the winner-take-all system would be tempered. The disputed election outcome in 2020 also had a very close margin; PPP/C won 50.69 percent of the vote while APNU+AFC won 47.34 percent of the vote. The 2020 election produced 72.5 percent voter turnout, which matched the previous highest turnout of 72 percent in 2015.

Given the consistently high voter turnout, neither party can count on winning by bringing more of their core party supporters to the polls. This explains the proliferation of smaller political parties during the 2015 and 2020 election cycles that forced the two main parties to seek out political partnerships with them. The PPP/C, for example, chose an Afro-Guyanese as its prime minister, which represents a continuing commitment to broader ethnic representation.

Another dynamic that could disrupt the prevailing political polarization is the growing influence of the indigenous population. Due to their geographical disbursement and isolation, there is not a strong Amerindian political party yet, but this segment of the population could become an important swing vote soon. KIs expressed that neither PPP/C nor APNU+AFC has included this population in the formation of policy and practices that address issues of land rights and the environment that affect the indigenous populations. Their isolation and detachment reduce their affinity to government and governance in Guyana. They are not beholden to any political party or leader.

Guyana Election Commission (GECOM)

Elections are administered by the Guyana Elections Commission (GECOM). The 2020 prolonged political impasse highlighted weaknesses in the political accountability for ensuring fair and free elections. Public mistrust in the commission is so high that it may not ever recover public confidence in its current configuration. The capacity of GECOM to serve as a neutral and effective overseer of the procedural aspects of the system was called into question because of the concerns regarding voter lists, voter registration, diaspora voting, vote-buying, and enforcement of campaign finance laws. Guyanese on both sides of the political aisle believe the integrity of GECOM has been severely compromised. The composition of the GECOM is based on recommendations from the Carter Center that were developed to address an earlier similar political crisis in the 1990s. The seven-member commission is comprised of three representatives each from the two dominant party alliances, the PPP/C and APNU+AFC. The chair is appointed by the President with agreement by the leader of the opposition. Smaller political parties would like to see a mandated set-aside seat for their representation on the commission.

EXECUTIVE BRANCH OF GOVERNMENT

The President of Guyana, currently the honorable Dr. Irfaan Ali, was elected by a closed party list and by winning the largest number of votes. It is very difficult to be elected to parliament and impossible as president without being a member of a political party. The president holds office for a term of five years and serves as Head of State, the Supreme Executive Authority, and the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces. The President also appoints members to constitutional commissions, chief justices; he can veto legislation and enjoys full immunity in the execution of his duties as president.

Political power is highly concentrated in the executive branch of the government through the Office of the President and the appointed Prime Minister. The executive presidency model was adopted in 1980 and the president exercises executive authority and control of the government through the cabinet of ministers. The constitution mandates a high degree of cabinet involvement in executive decision-making while the National Assembly serves as check on the executive branch. Consequentially, the executive branch of government is both protected and isolated from outside influence because there is no real ability for the opposition, civil society or the media to penetrate the inner workings of the executive.

The two recent close election returns may be a harbinger for changes that bring more transparency to the previously impermeable presidency. Externally, the president is messaging his government's commitment to increased predictability, political stability, and security. Domestically, President Ali and his 19-member cabinet are espousing a fresh approach to governing through new ideas, competency, and experience. The government has embarked on a series of public discussions throughout the country, although mostly in PPP/C strongholds, to deliver messages of unity, reform, inclusion, and equitable access to social services.

LEGISLATURE

The legislative power of Guyana resides in parliament, which according to the Constitution shall consist of the President and the National Assembly. The unicameral National Assembly is comprised of 65; 40 are elected based on proportional representation and 25 from geographical constituencies. The electoral system is best described as a hybrid system that utilizes some aspects of proportional representation and first past the post, which is unique in the region. It uses a closed list system to determine how seats won are occupied and the Hare Quota largest remainder formula to translate the votes cast into seats won by each political party.

There are no regulations that specify how parties identify and select candidates from the party list to become members of the Assembly. Further, because there is no requirement that the regional representatives must reside in the regions, equitable geographical representation is not guaranteed or often realized. The complete party control over the selection of members and their legislative agenda means there is no accountability driven by voters, only to party leaders. Cabinet ministers are also members of the Assembly and predictably support the government position. Since, the executive and the National Assembly are both typically controlled by the same party, the National Assembly cannot provide impartial oversight of the executive branch.

The National Assembly has the power to pass bills and constitutional amendments, which are then sent to the Executive President for approval. The distribution of seats in the current parliament is 33 seats for the PPP/C, 31 seats for the APNU+AFC and one seat for the three smaller parties: ANUG, LJP and TNM, which ran on a joint election list. Thirty-six percent of Assembly members are women.

The Speaker of the National Assembly is usually elected from among the members or from persons outside the Assembly who are qualified to be elected as members. The deputy speaker usually comes from the largest opposition party, but this tradition was broken in 2020 when a coalition member of the joint party list holding one seat in the National Assembly was installed as deputy speaker.

JUDICIARY

There is limited confidence in the independence of the judiciary. Many Guyanese see the adjudication of justice as a product of one's social and economic standing, political affiliation or alignments rather than based on the rule of law. In theory the judiciary is a co-equal branch of government with the legislature and executive. Arguably, in practice, the system of making temporary appointments of key officials in the judiciary in lieu of permanent appointments renders it susceptible to politicization and undue influence from the executive and legislature. The judicial system continues to be an important aspect of governance in Guyana, especially following the March 2020 national elections, which resulted in many court cases contesting the outcome of the election.

The stalemate over reforms to the judicial system, including police, has created an ad hoc approach to quality appointments of the chancellor and chief justice and undoing decades of court packing. In fact, since amendments to the constitution in 2001, Guyana has not filled the two most senior judicial appointments in the country. The individuals filling these positions are serving in an acting capacity, which dilutes their legitimacy and effectiveness.

The Judiciary is comprised of a Magistrate's Court for each of the ten regions that are held every three months, a Supreme Court, High Court and a Court of Appeal. The lower courts, known as the Magistrate's Court, have jurisdiction in criminal cases and civil suits involving small claims. The High Court has general jurisdiction in both civil and criminal matters. Appeals from the High Court rulings go to the Court of Appeal. The justice system is based on English Common Law with elements of Roman–Dutch Law.

The Chancellor has overall responsibility for the administration of justice in Guyana and is appointed by the President, after obtaining the agreement of the Leader of the Opposition. The President in accordance with the advice of the Judicial Service Commission appoints other judges except for the Chancellor and the Chief Justice. The President in conjunction with the Opposition Leader appoints the Chief Justice. The Judicial Service Commission comprises the Chancellor, the Chief Justice, the Chairman of the Public Service Commission, and other members appointed by the President.

People's access to the courts is still very limited despite ongoing reforms and investments in new court buildings and the development of a virtual platform to expedite court hearings and address the backlog of cases and lengthy pretrial detentions. This is especially true for those citizens living in the interior of the country and away from urban areas. The Magistrates of the upper courts have been reluctant to address human rights issues and increasing incidents of human trafficking and gender-based violence.

CARICOM observers of the vote recount of the March 2020 election noted that “the courts have a responsibility to ensure procedural fairness of the electoral process based on the law, but the line between that and courts becoming arbitrators in elections is thin and raised questions as to whether it is being crossed by the courts, or whether courts are the best places to resolve political matters, even when the courts avoid directly assessing the validity or looking into the political matters.”⁴⁹

CIVIL SERVICE

The public sector is large, inefficient, lacks adequate investment capital, institutional, infrastructure and human capacity and therefore fails to supply adequate public services. The Public sector provides administrative services to the entire country through a complex and unwieldy architecture of institutions that includes ministries of government, constitutional agencies, security forces, public and financial corporations, autonomous and semi-autonomous bodies, and regional administration. These services include public health, education, human and social security, postal, telecommunications, agricultural and mining services, registrations of businesses, births and deaths, immigration and legal among other services.

Insufficient coordination between the institutions that manage the public services is a serious problem. The legal framework guiding this sector needs to be overhauled with a focus on human resource management. There should be a functioning Public Service Commission (PSC) that is constitutionally mandated authority to appoint, transfer, discipline, and remove public officers. The PSC, however, is not staffed so there is no government body to delegate responsibility for appointments, transfers, and discipline to permanent secretaries or other heads of department. The Commission has an obligation to review the exercise of such delegated authority upon the request of the public officer. There is also a Department of Public Service (formerly the Public Service Ministry), which is responsible for overseeing the entire Public Service.

The lack of a functioning PSC has implications for responsiveness, effectiveness, and accountability. This is especially important at a time when good governance and strengthened public institutions have a critical role to play in transforming oil and gas revenues into economic development and sustained growth. The APNU+AFC campaigned on public sector reform during the 2015 election and in 2016 commissioned an inquiry into the public sector in 2016. A budget was allocated for modernizing the public sector through the establishment of the Bertram Collins College of Public Service to provide training for public servants. The College has since been closed by the current PPP/C administration and nothing has replaced it.

CIVIL SOCIETY

Guyanese civil society consists of many types of CSOs: formal non-governmental organizations, informal community-based organizations, labor organizations, human rights associations, religious organizations and networks, ethnic representative organizations, women's and vulnerable groups, legal fraternities and societies, youth organizations and networks, and others. During key informant interviews, many respondents said the lack of specific legislation regulating not-for-profit organizations hindered members'

⁴⁹ Barrow-Giles and Yearwood, 2020, p. 518.

ability to associate. Without specific authorizing legislation, civil society bodies are forced to register under the Company Act, which does not easily facilitate the operations of CSOs. Alternatively, some organizations are registered under the outdated Friendly Societies Act, which doesn't cater to a new and more dynamic organizational approach to civil society work. Due to this murky legal environment, the true number of CSOs in the country is unknown as there is no single governmental entity responsible for their monitoring.

The organizational levels of CSOs vary significantly. There are some well-established organizations with a physical office, financial and human resources and other organization depend solely upon their membership and benefactors to survive. The largest national CSOs focus primarily on issues related to democracy, rule of law, human rights (indigenous rights, gender, gender-based violence, youth, LGBTQI people, persons with disabilities, environmental justice), governance oversight, public policy advocacy, service delivery, grassroots and community development, and environmental issues. Some CSOs and CBOs operate as volunteer organizations that are not registered and operate in limited locations. Several NGOs operate under the auspices of the Guyana Human Rights Association and created an umbrella advocacy platform called "The Policy Forum Guyana." The 22-member PGF came into existence in 2015 with the goal of strengthening electoral, environmental and financial accountability.

Guyana's civil society is dynamic and cyclical. Advocates operate in cycles that correlate with the availability of donor funds. Their ability to advocate on issues and provide input into public policies is also stymied by a lack of capacity and knowledge in particular subject areas. The Pan American Development Foundation is presently implementing a small project aimed at increasing the technical capacity of CSOs in Guyana to monitor the extractive industries, particularly the oil and gas sector. Many of the CSOs are often accused of being biased and politically aligned affecting their ability to advocate. Many of the organizations also suffer from their own internal democracy and governance issues.

MEDIA

Guyana has private and public media outlets and thriving social media platforms. The government-owned a national newspaper, *Guyana Chronicle*, and national television station, *National Communications Network (NCN)*, have national coverage. Two national newspapers, *Kaieteur News* and *Stabroek News* are owned privately. Government-controlled radio monopolies ended in 2012 with the granting of private radio licenses. In 2016, further licenses were granted to private radio broadcasters by the APNU+AFC government; accusations of political favoritism followed the granting of licenses. The two non-state national newspapers are generally viewed as being impartial, however, because of coverage of governance issues related to the nascent oil and gas industry, *Kaieteur News* has been deemed anti-foreign investment and, at times, anti-government.

New media consists of many online news outlets, *Demerara Waves*, *Inews Guyana*, *Newsroom* and the *Village Voice*, some of which are affiliated with the traditional media such as newspapers and TV stations. Social media platforms such as *Facebook*, *Instagram*, *Twitter*, and *YouTube (Guyana Uncut)* are used to disseminate news and opinions. Very few of the new media outlets are independent but rather aligned to one of the two major political parties. The new media channels grew exponentially in the lead-up to the 2020 elections and played a major role in information dissemination and disinformation. They have been accused of contributing to ethnic strife through their disinformation campaigns. New media is particularly influential among the youth and urban populations, but has also made significant inroads into all segments of the Guyanese population.

The Guyana National Broadcast Authority is the oversight agency for television, cable, and radio broadcasters in Guyana and responsible for the implementation of the Broadcasting Act of 2011. Before

the establishment of the Authority in 2012, an Advisory Committee on Broadcasting existed from discussions with then-President Jagdeo and former President Desmond Hoyte. The implementation of the Broadcasting Act made some strides under the APNU+AFC government. A new board of the GNBA was installed in 2020. It should be noted that the Authority does not regulate online broadcasting sites and does not have the authority to regulate established TV and radio stations that broadcast content online such as Facebook Live content. The Guyana Press Association is the representational organization of media workers in Guyana. Its current president, a woman, is a senior journalist from a private media television station. Its vice-president, also a woman, is from the state newspaper.

MARGINALIZED POPULATIONS-INDIGENOUS POPULATIONS

The current indigenous population in Guyana constitutes 10.5 percent (82,913 people) of the overall population of 789,647, based on the Worldometer calculations of the latest United Nations population data. More than 90 percent of the indigenous population reside in about 160 communities in the “hinterland” regions and consists of several groups or nations. Indigenous communities grapple with inferior public services including education and health and access to public goods and services due to their geographical location. Local governance structures of indigenous communities, regional organs, and their village councils lack the managerial and technical capacity, including policy knowledge, to implement national policies in indigenous communities due to a lack of coordination among the national and local officials.⁵⁰ The national agency with responsibility for indigenous people's affairs is the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs but has not yet addressed the inadequacies present in the Amerindian Act, the main national legislation of indigenous governance in Guyana that was the focus of the 2018 review process coordinated and led by indigenous organizations and representatives

In national political, indigenous peoples are often courted heavily by both major political parties, which are dependent upon the indigenous communities to produce a majority. This has resulted in limited mainstreaming of indigenous interests in national debates and policies. Inequalities of conditions between the coastland and the interior are another dimension of social exclusion of indigenous people that is combined with exclusion based on identity. Lack of economic opportunities in the hinterland or Guyana's periphery of areas outside of the coastland affects indigenous peoples especially indigenous women and youth. Some strides have been made in addressing health and education inequalities including the provision of free internet in some communities, pilot projects for the teaching of indigenous children in their native language, and the establishment and upgrade of village and regional level hospitals to make them more culturally appropriate to improve use especially among pregnant women.

Land rights continue to be an important issue for the indigenous populations in Guyana. Both the present government and the former government boast about the progress made under their administrations in the land titling process, but indigenous communities and representative bodies remain largely dissatisfied. The Amerindian Peoples Association is one of the larger and older indigenous organizations and concerned about the status of the review process Amerindian Act under PPP/C. Indigenous groups have identified many issues with the revised Act of 2006.

Land rights deficiencies of the Amerindian Act include the following:

- Retains an arbitrary process for land demarcation and titling
- Fails to require that titling be based on customary land tenure systems or customary
- Laws on land and resource ownership are contrary to international law
- Vests title to land and resources only in individual villages and not also in another entity that could hold title on behalf of several villages jointly

⁵⁰ UNICEF 2017, Study on Indigenous Women and Children in Guyana

- Excludes all creeks and rivers and other water bodies from the indigenous title
- Lacks protections for the land and resource rights of communities who still lack a legal land title
- Imposes unjust eligibility requirements on indigenous communities wishing to apply for land title
- Allows mining and logging concessions to be issued over untitled traditional lands without prior consultation and consent, or in the case of logging without notification
- Invests the government with arbitrary powers to interfere in the functioning and the decision-making of indigenous peoples' governing bodies
- Subjects' traditional rights of indigenous peoples over State Lands and State Forests to the rights of leaseholders and others (Article 57)

The extractive industry of Guyana especially small-scale mining continues to be a threat to some indigenous communities. Rights groups have contended that the allocation of concessions for mining conflicts with both titled and untitled land. There have been conflicts between miners and indigenous communities, even though the National Tshuas Council sits on the board of the mining regulatory body the Guyana Geology and Mines Commission. In addition to the deficiencies pointed out related to land, the Act permits the overreach of powers of the Ministry of Amerindian Affairs and mandates a short tenure of village councils of three years.

Guyana is a non-signatory to the International Labour Organization Convention 169, which gives backing to the principle of Free Prior and Informed Consent. Despite this, the principle is used for donor-funded projects implemented by the government. However indigenous communities and their leaders contend that it is not fully followed and leads to many decisions and policies regarding hinterland development which negatively affects indigenous communities and threatens their social fabric. Access to the internet needs improvement in indigenous communities; lack of internet access affects their access to information, ability to participate in public policy consultations, and even affects entrepreneurship and commerce development in their communities.

SECURITY SERVICES

Guyana's security sector consists of several bodies called the Joint Services. The Joint Services, which is now under the control of the Ministry of Home Affairs whereas it was previously under the Ministry of Public Security. Joint Services consists of the Guyana Defense Force, Guyana Police Force, Guyana Prison Service, and Guyana Fire Service. The head of the Joint Services is the President. Public security and immigration are under the remit of the Ministry, despite the change in government in 2020. During the period 2016 - 2020 public security emerged as a concern for citizens and the authorities.

GUYANA POLICE FORCE

Perception of the Guyana Police Force is evenly split with half of the interviewed respondents viewing the police favorably while the other half expressing negative views. The negative perceptions of the force were shared equally between coastlands and persons in hinterland locations. Police abuses and excesses have been alleged by young urban Afro-Guyanese males, indigenous persons, and migrants from Venezuela. During 2020 several policemen in various hinterland locations were accused of rape.⁵¹ At the time of this assessment, some senior police officers, including an Assistant Police Commissioner have been charged with fraud.⁵² The Office of Professional Responsibility is responsible for investigations of complaints against

⁵¹ See: <https://www.stabroeknews.com/2020/08/08/news/guyana/cops-accused-of-raping-woman-at-lethem/> , <https://newsroom.gy/2021/02/16/cop-under-close-arrest-for-allegedly-raping-woman-at-moruca/>

⁵² See: <https://guyanachronicle.com/2021/04/17/more-fraud-charges-for-senior-police-officers/> , <https://newsroom.gy/2021/03/26/assistant-police-commissioner-three-others-charged-with-fraud/>

police. In 2017, the Office received 644 cases of complaints, a five percent increase over 2016. Thirty-one police officers were dismissed after investigations of their complaints were completed.

The Guyana Police Force is operational in all 10 regions of Guyana with a commander responsible for each region. The decision of the placement of commander is the purview of the Commissioner, the head of the Guyana Police Force. The Commissioner is chosen by the head of the Joint Services, which is the President of Guyana. The present Acting Commissioner was appointed in August 2020. One of his challenges is that salaries continue to be low, which affect the force's ability to attract persons with the necessary qualifications. There was consensus among civil society stakeholders consulted during this assessment that the police administration needs an overhaul, including training of its members, an increase in salaries, and improved working conditions.

GUYANA DEFENSE FORCE

The Guyana Defense Force continues to be held in high regard by all stakeholders in Guyana. This was reinforced by their non-involvement in the aftermath of the 2020 elections. Respondents interviewed for this assessment remarked that they have minimal interaction with the GDF, which they consider a good thing. They do recognize the increasing importance of the work of the force in protecting the borders of the country and the national security especially considering the recent oil discoveries. As part of efforts to increase the capacity of the GDF, parliament approved a partial advance payment of approximately \$2 million on a Bell 412 helicopter. This along with other approved expenditures will improve the capacity of the force to conduct aerial operations.

Four soldiers were dismissed and three were charged with rape of a minor in the hinterland in March 2021. The incident reinforces the need for further work and building of relationships between the army and indigenous populations and hinterland residents. Indigenous representatives report an improvement of relations because of some mechanisms put in place by the army such as limited stay in communities. However, since indigenous persons do encounter members of the GDF in their communities more than other citizens, there have been many instances of conflicts.

PUBLIC INTEGRITY INSTITUTIONS

Ethnic Relations Commission. The ERC aims to promote ethnic harmony and security in Guyana. One of its many functions is the establishment of “mechanisms and procedures for arbitration, conciliation, mediation and like forms of dispute resolution that would ensure ethnic harmony and peace.” In the latter part of 2020 and early months of 2021, editorials and opinions expressed on social media have questioned the effectiveness of the Commission and its ability to carry out its functions. The present Commission has engaged in some public education and outreach activities to encourage a national conversation on race. There are mixed reviews on the effectiveness of the Commission due to its limited capacity to reach consensus within the committee membership. During the 2020 elections, the Commission launched a media monitoring platform to discourage new media from fanning the flames of racism in Guyana. As a result, journalists and politicians were brought before the Commission for publishing inflammatory public statements on Facebook, in particular⁵³. A member of the Commission also was accused of making racial statements and sections of the society demanded his resignation.

The Ethnic Relations Commission was established in 2000 by the Constitution, through Amendment No.2 Act No.11. It is a product of the Constitution Reform Committee's recommendations to the National Assembly in 1998. The commission operated for many years after its establishment and then was dormant

⁵³ See: <https://www.kaieteurnewsonline.com/2020/06/18/erc-meets-with-guyanese-critic-on-racial-statements/>, <https://villagevoicenews.com/2020/08/19/14-wanted-by-erc-for-alleged-racially-insensitive-comments/>

from 2011 to 2018. In 2018, a chairperson and nine members of the Commission were sworn in by the then-president. Members of the Commission are drawn from representatives of religious bodies, the labor movement, the private business sector, youth, and women. The ERC also makes public policy recommendations to the national assembly.

Women and Gender Equality Commission. The WGEC has a constitutional mandate to support “gender issues, promote the advancement of women in society and investigates and make recommendations to the parliament.”⁵⁴ The Commission has not been successful in convincing the National Assembly to adapt its recommendations. Other barriers to its proper functioning include financial resources for programs and public education and awareness.

Its main functions are promoting the integration of women’s need and interests and mainstreaming of gender issues; promoting the empowerment of women; promoting women’s needs, interests, and concerns in the wider spectrum of economic and social development and addressing both the practical and strategic needs of women as being different from those of men. The Commission can make recommendations for legislation and the formulation of policies and measures to enhance and protect the status of women. The Commission also carries out research and created a data base on women and gender-related issues, including health, especially reproductive health, violence against women and the family. The Commission is made up of a Chairperson and members selected from civil society, including women’s organizations, labor, private sector, and religious bodies.

Integrity Commission. The Commission has had mixed success in its endeavor to get public officials to declare assets. As recent as 2020, 25 Members of the National Assembly and 52 Officials failed to declare their assets for the period July 2018 to June 2019 and were threatened with Court Action by the Commission. Established by the Integrity Commission Act of 1997, the Commission’s purpose is to improve governance by securing the Integrity of Persons in Public Life. The Commission also receives, retains, and examines declarations of assets, liabilities, income from specified persons in public life.

INTERNATIONAL ACTORS

The set of international actors relevant to Guyana includes not just members of the international community active inside the country, but also those active in the region and elsewhere.

United States. US policy views Guyana as a strong partner in the Caribbean, especially through the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative to enhance the security and prosperity of the region. As the nearest significant donor partner, the US works closely with Guyana to combat drug trafficking and other transnational crimes that threaten regional security. Guyana is a transit country for cocaine destined for the US and Canada, and US assistance aims to strengthen the integrity and capacity of Guyana’s criminal justice system as well as democracy and transparency programming, including support of Guyana’s membership in the EITI to promote accountability in royalty resources. The US is one of Guyana’s most significant trading partners and home to an estimated 200,000 Guyanese diaspora, the majority of whom live in New York City.

Caribbean Community. The CARICOM secretariat is in Guyana, which represents 20 countries. CARICOM rests on four main pillars of regional cooperation: economic integration, foreign policy coordination, human and social development, and security. US Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken met virtually with the foreign ministers from the CARICOM member states on April 21, 2021 to advance bilateral and regional interests, specially focused on plans to manage the COVID-19 pandemic and to promote a

⁵⁴ <https://wgec.gov.gy/about.php>

regional recovery, cooperation on increasing climate resilience, and continued collaborations on strengthening security, democratic values, and human rights.

Inter-American Development Bank. The Country Representative for the IDB has been in Guyana for nine years and has worked closely with the GOG in building the capacity of the public sector to become more efficient and strengthen governing systems. The targeted areas of investment are infrastructure, hospitality, and agriculture. The IDB advises the GOG to prioritize public procurement reforms and operationalizing the oversight of the country's sovereign wealth fund. The other pressing need is to develop a public investment planning body that will link strategic policy goals to public spending.

World Bank. The current World Bank project portfolio in Guyana amounts to \$61 million across five projects in the areas of education, energy and extractives, flood risk management, and the financial sector. These projects contribute to Guyana's efforts to enhance resilience to natural disasters, improve the quality of education and skills, and support private sector development initiatives, particularly by focusing on improving the business environment and financial sector development, all identified as priorities through broad-based consultations.

United Nations. The UN has 23 entities operating in Guyana, the largest is the UNDP, which convenes the donor coordination working group. The largest funded UN activities focus on health, humanitarian assistance to vulnerable populations, resilience building and agricultural support. The UN agencies led a multi-donor task force to address the expanding problem of gender-based violence through a public education campaign and engaging government counterparts.

Canada. Most regional aid to the Caribbean and to Guyana is funded through Canada's contributions to the IBRD Trust Fund for the Caribbean Resilience Facility and the IMF Regional Technical Assistance Center. Bilateral aid to Guyana targets climate resilience activities and supporting vulnerable populations, including people with disabilities, gender, youth, LGBTQI and institutions that support indigenous populations. The Local Initiatives Fund provides grants to CSOs working at the subnational level that support inclusive governance, gender equality and empowerment of women and girls, health, education, nutrition, and climate action.

United Kingdom. UKAid to the region and Guyana is primarily focused on helping the Caribbean prepare for and reduce the risk from climate change and disasters. Targeted aid to Guyana helps vulnerable people to be better prepared and equipped to withstand these climate and disaster threats through training and institutional capacity building. Other aid assistance goes to retrofitting hospitals in the regions outside of Georgetown and rural development projects that benefit indigenous peoples.

European Union. The EU delegation concentrates on a few development issues, including climate change and forest protection, judicial reforms, and governance on a very broad scale. It also supported the EU election observer delegation and drafted 26 recommendations for improving electoral procedures; the findings were shared in a series of roundtable discussions.

China. China's diplomatic and economic relationships with Guyana dates to 1972 when Guyana's Prime Minister recognized China and the economic ties have only strengthened over the past two decades. China's 'development policy' implementation is directed by the perceived needs of the Guyanese political establishment so there is little to no oversight or sustainability in its work. If the Government of Guyana chooses to adhere to its *Green State Development Strategy (GSDS): Vision 2040 Diversified, Resilient, Low-carbon, People-centered*⁵⁵, China's infrastructure projects could be slowed down. Adherence to the GSDS is

⁵⁵ <https://www.doe.gov.gy/published/document/5cd1d69fe5569929a69b35b0>

unlikely however given that this strategy was developed under the APNU+AFC government and the current government has demonstrated a preference for changing previous steps taken or implemented.

INTERNATIONAL NON-STATE ACTORS

Guyana Diaspora. Another important factor in this analysis is the role of the estimated 500,000, Guyana first-generation immigrants worldwide.⁵⁶ The International Organization for Migration (IOM) states that the skilled and qualified diaspora can be found in the United Kingdom, North America, Barbados, Antigua, and Trinidad and Tobago.⁵⁷ The US Immigration and Naturalization Service reported an estimated 250,000 regular migrants to the US. Other estimates peg the Guyanese diaspora in the US at 400,000 (both regular and irregular migrants). The Guyanese diaspora are generally well educated and technically skilled; they could become an important asset if incentives are offered to encourage the return of professionals either temporarily or longer-term. About half of the working-age Guyanese migrants in the US work in professional, managerial, or sales occupations while other occupations include service, construction, and agriculture industries⁵⁸. The oil and non-oil economic sectors are facing a chronic shortage of skilled labor in technical, agriculture, financial services, tourism, health services, and hospitality services that can be filled by members of the diaspora. International investors and skilled workers in the oil sector, for example are already generating demand for reliable power sources, better infrastructure and airports, access to high-speed internet and telecommunications, high quality hotel accommodations, safety inspected foods served at modern restaurants, transportation, access to internationally linked financial institutions, and adequately staffed and resourced health care facilities.

Despite living in other places Guyanese stay connected to governance issues in their homeland through friends, families, and monitoring of the local and international media. Some Guyanese have returned to Guyana and are actively involved in the political parties.⁵⁹ The University of Guyana sought through a diaspora project to engage Guyanese academics in higher education and business opportunities in Guyana.⁶⁰ The IOM's Effective and Sustainable Diaspora Engagement for Development in the Caribbean ESDCDC also made efforts to induce the diaspora in private investment in the country. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has a diaspora unit, but its activities have been limited though it does recognize that the diaspora can play a meaningful role in the development activities of the country. The ministry has collaborated with the Center for Strategic International Studies in its development of a Guyana mapping project that is partially funded by Exxon Mobil.⁶¹

Organized Crime. Transnational organized crime networks are expanding and diversifying their activities, resulting in the convergence of risks and threats that are increasingly complex and destabilizing, according to the U.N. Office on Drugs and Crime, which reported a staggering increase in homicide rates in the region that increased by an average of nearly 150 percent from 2000 to 2018.⁶² The trafficking of illicit drugs and illegal guns is still the primary activity of transnational organized crime in the region. Levels of insecurity are rising along with increases in unemployment and income inequality and low levels of economic growth.

⁵⁶ Center for Strategic and International Studies 2020, The Guyanese Diaspora

⁵⁷ <https://www.iom.int/news/iom-and-guyana-launch-diaspora-engagement-project>

⁵⁸ Center for Strategic and International Studies 2020, The Guyanese Diaspora

⁵⁹ <https://guyanatimesgy.com/submit-proof-of-relinquished-foreign-citizenship-parliament-clerk-to-mps/>

⁶⁰ <https://guyanatimesgy.com/ugs-diaspora-conference-set-for-may-2020/>

⁶¹ <https://www.csis.org/analysis/guyanese-diaspora>

⁶² U.N. Office on Drugs and Crime dashboard, accessed on May 5, 2021.

ANNEX D: ASSESSMENT TEAM

ASSESSMENT TEAM

Brenda Lee Pearson, Team Lead, is a senior development specialist with 30 years of experience conducting applied research and implementing programs across multiple sectors. She has worked with USAID, Department of State, Millennium Challenge Corporation, the World Bank, Department for International Development, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and the World Food Programme. Ms. Pearson has been a Team Leader for DRG Assessments in Honduras, Bosnia Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, Tanzania; the Senior Technical Advisor for DRG Assessments in Georgia, South Africa, Indonesia, and Liberia. Ms. Pearson is a deeply experienced DRG specialist and led or overseen more than 30 evaluations around the world focused on DRG programming areas, economic growth, gender, and food security. Ms. Pearson has been the Chief of Party (or equivalent) for political party and processes, civil society, social protection reform, gender, and monitoring and evaluation platform projects. She holds advanced degrees in international economics and American foreign policy from Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies.

The Assessment Team included three more team members selected to provide a range of DRG sub-sector expertise. All three had responsibility for collaborating with the team lead and MSI technical experts to adapt the DRG SAF to the Guyana context, implement the assessment under guidance of the team lead, actively participate in data analysis, and contribute to drafting and finalizing the assessment report.

Candice Ramessar, Country Expert, is an international governance consultant. She has worked on donor-funded projects in Guyana, Barbados, Grenada, Jamaica, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago, and the United States. Ms. Ramessar's knowledge of Guyana and Caribbean encompasses many sectors including social development, gender equality, youth, inclusive development, and the environment.

Remi Anderson, Political Analyst, is an academic with over twelve years of experience in qualitative research in Guyanese and Caribbean Politics, Caribbean and international development, and public sector migration. She currently serves as a Lecturer at the University of Guyana in the Department of Government and International Affairs, Faculty of Social Sciences.

Catherine Martin, Senior Project Coordinator, has over fifteen years of experience in governance and public administration. She has served in four government administrations in Guyana in various capacities as a technical assistant, communications manager, policy implementation and logistics administrator. **Valencia Wren, Logistician**, is a training and education specialist. She has over twelve years of experience in both public and private sectors in the Caribbean and Guyana working to develop and monitor learning curricula in areas of ICT, persons with disabilities, and governance.